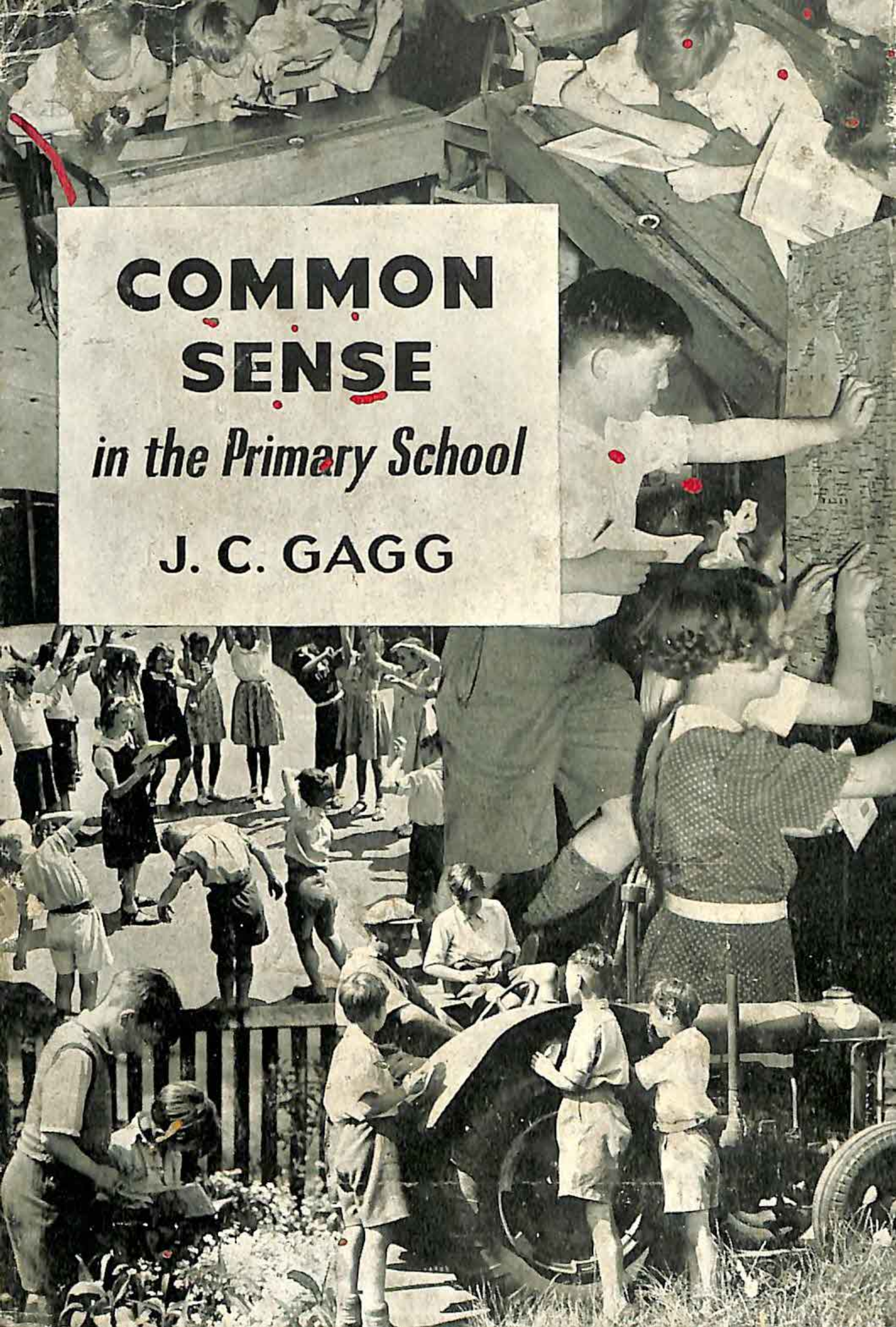


COMMON SENSE
in the Primary School

J. C. GAGG

There is no complicated theme in COMMON SENSE IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL. Its message is simple and direct. It is that children can learn thoroughly and happily through a balanced mixture of initiative and control. And it suggests just HOW they can learn in this way.

In a sensible approach to current trends it shows how use can be made of centres of interest alongside firm and definite basic subject training. A wealth of workable suggestions provide a basis for bringing new life and interest into learning, and there are continuous ideas for closer links between the various school subjects.

Throughout, the author talks directly to *you*, about *your* children and *your* job. He takes you into schools, faces you with children and solves the problems of table teaching, making History syllabuses, Handwork schemes and the thousand and one sides of a teacher's work.

COMMON SENSE IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL is, at last, a book on EDUCATION which goes right into the classroom and stays there.

Z.26714

9s. 6d. net

Pay

372.21
G1A2C

Common Sense in the Primary School

by

J. C. GAGG

Advisory Teacher for Oxfordshire Primary Schools
Former Lecturer in Education at Eastbourne Training College

DAVID HARE TRAINING COLLEGE * LIBRARY *
50
20.3.52

EVANS BROTHERS LIMITED
LONDON

TO MY MOTHER AND FATHER
—would that all parents
were like them

372
GAG

Bureau Ednl. Psy. Research
DAVID HARE TRAINING COLLEGE
Dated............20.3.53
A/cs. No...50

First published 1951

Printed in Great Britain by
Jarrold and Sons Limited,
Norwich
Z6714

PLEASE READ THIS FIRST

INTRODUCTIONS are a bit of a nuisance, but I'd better say something about this book, or it might startle you.

You see, it isn't at all like those solemn 'Education' books which stand cheek to cheek on the shelves of college libraries. It doesn't aspire or expect to rest next to Burt and Nunn and Raymont and Co. It aims rather to be on the shelves and in the hands of the *class teacher*.

I know, and you know, that books on 'Education' tend to be associated only with training college days. This is a bad thing, but nevertheless it's true. And if a class teacher were asked why, the answer would probably be: "Because they never talk about *my class*!"

They do, you know. But not in the way you mean. They don't talk about Johnny Smith's long multiplication and Mary Jones's method of giving out books; and in particular they don't talk about how to fix up school shops, mark compositions, form reading groups, and all those other worries which keep you awake at night.

Well, this book *does* try to talk about those things. It tries to get down to earth in an ordinary classroom, with a large class and little equipment. And it talks about the things you might do in that room, despite everything.

You'll laugh at some of the things I suggest. You'll have done them for years. But be tolerant; the teacher next door may be delighted with the idea! And anyhow, *you* may find something on the next page.

You may even be a little surprised by the style I've used: "I", "you", "try this", "do that", "forget about the other", and so on. But since I'm not writing about inert ideas and stratification theories and norms and correlations I'm blowed if I'm going to use English appropriate to such matters. Rather I want to chat with *you* about *your* children and *your* work. So I've used a conversational style (and conversation isn't always grammatical!).

I must end this introduction by apologising for using the word 'Activity'. I've used it here and there for want of a better label, and I'm beginning to regret it. For more and more teachers—quite 'active' teachers—are shying away from the word like startled horses, and putting it with Projects and Topics and Free Discipline—and all the other 'tags'—into a compartment of their minds labelled 'stunts'.

I must say I can't blame them, for some versions of 'Activity' *are* stunts, and dangerous ones at that, and I've got something to say about them in the first chapter. So I hasten to tell you that I am NOT what is coming to be called an 'activity-merchant'. As the title of the book implies, what I am trying to show you is a common-sense approach to lively but firm teaching. So please, I beg of you, don't start mixing me up with children running about hitting each other on the heads with heavy hammers. And please don't confuse me with vast requisitions of expensive material, or with teachers driven out of their minds, or with a complete neglect of basic subjects, or with any of the other things usually associated with the ambiguous word 'Activity'.

I've particularly avoided all these unhappy results in my own version of teaching. But I hope I've achieved active and happy work, nevertheless. And that includes the Three R's, which have had rather a thin time in some circles lately.

I've rather cheekily put the contents of this book to you as my own ideas. It's just my way of writing, for obviously no ideas about teaching can belong to any one person, and no idea in the world is entirely new.

My own views must have developed from a variety of sources which would be difficult to trace in full. I must, however, record my debt to colleagues and children in Nottinghamshire, Birmingham, Sussex, and Oxfordshire, as well as to argumentative refresher course audiences in fifteen English cities, and to the hundreds of teachers who write to me when they read my articles.

For, to be honest about it, they all helped to write this book—especially the children.

J. C. G.

Oxford 1951

CONTENTS

Part One—Let's look at our job

CHAPTER PAGE

I. WHAT'S HAPPENING TO TEACHING? 7

II. LET'S LOOK AT CHILDREN 14

III. CHILDREN AT SCHOOL 17

IV. SOME PRELIMINARY PLANS 26

V. SOME PRACTICAL IDEAS 35

VI. A CLASS AT WORK 47

Part Two—The Basic Subjects

VII. HELPING CHILDREN TO SPEAK 57

VIII. HELPING CHILDREN TO READ 69

IX. HELPING CHILDREN TO WRITE 81

X. HELPING CHILDREN WITH ARITHMETIC 94

Part Three—The Rest of the Subjects

XI. THE SUBJECT CALLED GEOGRAPHY 128

XII. THE SUBJECT CALLED HISTORY 140

XIII. THE SUBJECT CALLED NATURE STUDY 152

XIV. THE QUESTION OF MUSIC 161

XV. EXPRESSION THROUGH ART 165

XVI. THE WIDE SCOPE OF HANDWORK 174

XVII. WHAT OTHER SUBJECTS? 193

Postscript

ONE HUNDRED QUESTIONS FOR YOU 202

The photographs in this book were taken in and near the schools at North Newington and Wroxton in Oxfordshire. I am most grateful to the Head Teachers for allowing their work to illustrate so admirably what I am trying to say.

PART ONE

LET'S LOOK AT OUR JOB

CHAPTER I

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO TEACHING?

WE'RE a queer lot of people, you know. We get on with our jobs quietly, and, to our way of thinking, efficiently. But let anybody suggest that there may be a better way, and the biggest hullabaloo imaginable rises from a thousand throats. It's not all derision and disagreement, I know, but on the whole we tend to dig in our heels very firmly, on the 'once bitten, twice shy' principle.

In these first few chapters, therefore, if you don't mind, I'd like to examine the trend of teaching methods today; to try to bring a little common sense to bear on some of the wilder arguments; and in particular to suggest ways in which YOU can make some use of the progressive ideas which are abroad.

Now I know well enough what you're likely to say: "Oh, another of these blessed activity merchants; wish he'd got *my* class!"—so in this first chapter I feel rather like crawling on my knees to you, for I want at all costs to get rid of the many antagonisms, rash arguments, and misunderstandings which are so common.

Will you bear with me in this? For I'm certain above everything that the antagonism is unfair, the arguments often uninformed, and the misunderstandings unnecessary. Whether I can persuade you also of this is my first problem. But in any case, you can always skip these early chapters, for the rest of the book suggests in no uncertain way—perhaps even in a useful way—how you can do lively teaching of both the basic subjects and the remaining part of the curriculum.

Three Professional Plagues

Anyhow, I'm going to start with a bold attempt to analyse *why* we are so chary about 'modern methods'. And I'm convinced that the root of our caution lies in three professional plagues—'*tags*', '*stunts*', and *over-eager enthusiasts*; and all three have had a profound and bad influence on teaching methods. So adverse has been their effect on really progressive work that I'd like to deal with each in turn.

'*Tags*'

By 'tags' I mean those easily given and badly defined 'method-labels' from which we've suffered for many years, until teachers groan at the sight of a new one. We've had Projects, Topics, Centres of Interest, Units of Work, Social Studies, and Local Studies, invented by Inspectors, Organisers, Training College Lecturers, and just plain enthusiasts. And heaven knows how many more fancy names have lived their fleeting lives in Penzance and Pity Me, in Blubberhouses and Bournemouth.

And now, of course, we have 'Activity', which is beginning to stagger under the derision accumulated by all the others.

I beg you to believe two things about all these 'tags':

(i) They are, when all's said and done, mere NAMES. And in almost every case they were originally given to honest and successful attempts to make teaching alive.

(ii) Unfortunately, the names—and thus the methods—were invariably so chivvied about, misused, and half-digested, that an undeserved scorn came to be associated with each label in turn.

Thus each in turn led to staff-room bickerings, wild enthusiasms and cynical laughter, back-slappings and back-bitings. New 'labels' came to be regarded as periodic and unnecessary doses of castor oil—to be endured, sworn at, and forgotten. And the final result was only too often a constipation worse than before.

I say, therefore: *Beware of the 'tag'*. Search behind it every time, and if you ignore the casual and wild talker and writer, you will invariably find something sensible and valuable, something which may be of use to *you*. But be honest and open-minded about it. Automatic hostility to anything new is unfair *and* unprofitable.

'Stunts'

The 'stunt' is in quite a different category. It is much more dangerous than a real method with a 'tag' to it, for there may be solid truth behind the 'tag'.

There is nothing behind a 'stunt'. It is almost always a hurried and bad attempt to be 'different', put on by misguided people who think that such practices are fashionable. It is, therefore, psychologically, educationally, and morally wrong.

You may feel that these are strong words to use about 'teaching methods', but my answer is that I *do* feel strongly about 'stunts'. And for this reason: *They have done, and continue to do, incalculable harm to really progressive work.*

The busy teacher is unable to spare the time to distinguish between a 'stunt' and something of real worth. Some crackpot idea, worked out with an eye to promotion or fame, often gets more publicity than a sound and carefully evolved change of approach to children.

Thus *all* variations of method tend to be lumped together under the one heading of 'stunts'; and all are discarded with equal rapidity. So the dear old chalk-and-talk, teacher-and-taught continue on their unchallenged ways.

This is a tragedy for the profession, and above all a tragedy for the children. So again I beg of you:

Be ready to spot a 'stunt'. And above all do not confuse it with an honest, well-thought-out departure from traditional methods. For such a departure may have something in it for YOU.

Over-eager Enthusiasts

Over-eager enthusiasts are our third plague but, like 'tags', they are all the better for sympathetic thought and understanding.

They are the people who seize happily on labelled method and unlabelled 'stunt' alike. They read a hasty paragraph, half-hear an odd lecture, and go dashing off to the classroom with excited cries of enthusiasm. They do Projects and Topics and Activities—or at least *their* versions of Projects and Topics and Activities!—and they are equally ready to allow children of eight to smoke, or to grow flowers upside down on the ceiling, or to follow up any other fantastic idea they may have heard mooted.

And frankly, they are quite a menace.

Their efforts are only too often not restricted to the classroom, for they cannot keep quiet about their undeveloped and thus ineffective ideas. They run around preaching the gospel of 'progress' far and wide, and other teachers, not satisfied with their own methods, listen to them. And in no time their 'methods' are spreading like the rot in an apple.

How terribly unfortunate this is! For there is often nothing wrong with either the idea or the individual in the first place. But the haste of the individual and the corruption of the idea turn potential good into potential harm.

You have only to remember how the Project has been murdered in this way. And look around you now at the chaotic happenings so often miscalled 'Activity'. Yes, the over-eager enthusiasts have much to answer for.

So again, I beseech you, be ready to spot them. And in particular, *beware of regarding them as progressive.* Keen—yes. But misguided, hasty, and thoughtless, too. And up and down the country they must take much of the blame for the misunderstanding associated with 'modern methods'.

. . . . .

Well, I don't know whether my analysis is accurate or not. Perhaps, even, I've over-estimated the amount of antagonism and misunderstanding which exists. Anyhow, I hope at least that I've caused you to think and talk, rather than to ignore or sneer.

You see, I have some questions I'd like to ask you. They're cheeky, perhaps, but at least they're not stuffy or dull.

I'd like you, seriously and honestly, to answer the following:

(i) Have you ever said to yourself: "*Why do I teach what I teach?*" and "*Why do I teach the way I teach?*" In other words, have you ever criticised to yourself your syllabus and your methods?

(ii) Have you ever examined thoroughly any new teaching method, and given it an extensive try-out?

(iii) What do *you* think of 'Projects'? And have you ever 'done' one?

(iv) Have you now reached the stage when you throw articles on 'modern methods' into the waste-paper basket?

(v) When you are teaching, which of these is uppermost in your mind: (*a*) "How can the children best *learn* this?" or (*b*) "How can I best *teach this*?"

(vi) Can you define exactly what is meant by 'Activity Methods'?

Well, that's a pretty little mixture of provocative questions, but the answers may surprise you.

That last question in particular: I'd like to see fifty teachers sit down and answer it, and I'd guarantee that all the answers would be different. But that won't stop me from giving you my own answer to it in the rest of the book.

And at least I can promise you that my own idea of Activity, whether it agrees with others or not, will be practicable and restrained, and not a bit like some of the astonishing goings-on which now masquerade under the same name.

What is 'Activity'?

Well now, let's have a preliminary look at this 'Activity' business, and see if we can get a bit of sense out of it. For it saddens me to see the battle-light which springs to so many eyes when the word is mentioned. And I'm afraid that this battle-light is almost solely due to the over-eager enthusiasts I have mentioned.

They've made a mess of 'Activity'; and thus many teachers have built up quite a wrong idea of what it *really* means (or should I say "what it means to *me*"?).

Meet Joe Stick-in-the-Mud, then. For Joe has six hard accusations to fire at me. And I'd like to give a brief answer to each in turn.

1. "*Activity is a Revolution in Method*"

This statement, all too commonly heard, is absurd. 'Activity' is not even a real *change* of method. It is rather a different *bias* in the preparations for your daily work. Your thoughts turn more to the children and what *they* can do, and less towards what *you* are going to do. They dwell more on the *learning* side and less on the *teaching*. Thus each lesson or period of time is considered from the point of view of 'What will happen to the children, and to the children's minds?'

2. "*Activity Means that the Teacher Must Change His Skin*"

A terrifying thought, Joe, but again luckily untrue. Nobody can change his character overnight, but any teacher on earth can introduce the type of child-activity which I have in mind. It merely means doing *more* of the sort of things that children have always done in schools in a small, repressed way, and the giving of *more* choice and *more* initiative to the children in what they do.

The teacher *may* have to change in so far as he becomes less of a dictator and more of a leader, but that's all.

3. "*Activity in the Junior School is the same as Activity in the Infant School*"

This is very unfortunate, if you happen to believe it. But surely a moment's thought will tell you that Infants, because they *are* Infants, are denied many forms of *mental* activity which are possible with Juniors. Infants are *physically* active. But to try to adapt 'Infant Activity' to the Junior School is like trying to stop a child from growing. You'll see, later in this book, how different Junior work can be.

4. "*Activity Means Noise and Movement*"

Again nonsense, but obviously arising from the previous misunderstanding. Some wild forms of teaching may mislead you, but Activity after the Infant School becomes more and more intellectual, and less physical. Primary children will make things and move about at times, but they will also be active with pens and brushes and books, looking things up and reading and writing and pasting and painting.

Possibly this *physical* interpretation of Activity is the worst of the lot.

5. "*Activity Means Impossible Quantities of Material*"

This misconception arises from the "noise and movement" one. It presupposes that Activity is 'Handwork', which is ridiculous.

Children are NOT making things all the time; but even when they are, the correct 'Activity attitude' is for them to bring their own materials, and to improvise models with odds and ends which appear on no requisition list. I'd go so far as to say that a wise teacher will even reduce his requisitions, since much card and paper needed for dreary formal 'Handwork' can be dispensed with. You can use the money thus saved to buy more reference books for 'Mental Activity'.

6. "*Activity Means Illiteracy*"

Here's *physical* Activity again—the prevalent misconception that all formal work must be dropped in favour of hooliganism. If you do that, of course, you'll get illiteracy—and a nervous breakdown into the bargain. But if you follow the rest of this book carefully, you'll see a very strong insistence on basic subject teaching, and on much 'literary' work in connection with 'child-subjects'. *Sensible* 'Activity' can in fact do much to encourage really backward children to read and write—things which they may never do otherwise. *Interest* is a good fertiliser for literacy.

. . . . .

Now, I hope I've whetted your appetite for something, if it's only for whetting a knife for me.

But before I go any farther, I really must ask you to have a quick look at *children*. No, don't run away; it won't take long (though it should really take a lifetime!).

CHAPTER II

LET'S LOOK AT CHILDREN

BEHIND every teacher's methods, whether they are blessed by a 'label' or not, should lie consideration for *the children* above all else—above the 'scholarship', above the teacher's comfort, and above the mere requirements of a future job.

I would suggest that behind the label of 'Activity' (the common-sense one!) lies a greater consideration of children's needs than we have ever known before. And no method, however mutilated by stunt-merchants and madcaps, can be wrong if the children are its first consideration.

Let's look, therefore, at these children of ours, and see where 'Activity' arises. And I make no excuse for looking at them, for I feel that in the bustle of the classroom the children, astonishingly enough, tend to be overlooked.

Well, what about them? What goes on in their minds while they are learning tables, writing compositions, reading books? What are their inclinations when they have to do spelling, fill in blanks, and refrain from spilling water-pots?

I suppose this comes dangerously near to psychology, which, of course, it a matter for training colleges, not classrooms—or is it? But whether it's psychology or not, Primary children seem to me to have the following natural tendencies:

1. *They are NOSEY-PARKERS*

Their tiny world is widening hourly. New facts, new things, new people and new experiences come to light whichever way they turn. And they have a boundless inclination to ferret farther and farther in their search for more.

Interests may be sometimes fleeting, sometimes protracted, but they are never non-existent. Every child, therefore, has a bottomless curiosity which is never satisfied, *if we will only give him the opportunity to try and satisfy it.*

Here, then, is a pointer for us; a warning against *too much teaching*, and a suggestion that we allow and organise *more learning*. How does that fit in with YOUR methods?

2. *They like CREATING things*

Children love their growing 'productivity'. They like to be able to turn round and say: "*I* did *that*!" And their pleasure is much more spontaneous than the quieter satisfaction of adults in the same sort of thing. This creative delight can show itself not only in models, but in many forms of Art and Crafts, in written work, songs, dramatic work and similar forms of self-expression.

The lesson *we* should learn from this is rather subtle, for we must distinguish between *creation* and *reproduction*. In other words, the satisfaction of a child in making, writing, or drawing something to order is never as great as his satisfaction in creating something from his own mind. We must therefore help him with techniques, but give him wide scope in subjects and materials.

Again, look at YOUR methods; at your composition subjects, art subjects, craft subjects; at your singing and at the models you make. *Whose creations are they—yours or the children's?*

3. *They're beginning to form 'GANGS'*

This is rather an important tendency, for in the end it is connected with the whole principle of community-living. And perhaps even adults could learn something about living together in friendly co-operation.

During the Primary stage children begin to look to others, to 'get together' with others instead of ploughing lone furrows. In many schools, particularly with boys, this shows itself in playground 'gangs', which can become quite a nuisance. And in other ways you will notice little groups and cliques beginning to form.

We must use this tendency, and use it to a good purpose. Which means that we must encourage children to work in groups, to learn in groups, and to create things in groups. Thus we not only harness a natural tendency, but also lay foundations for a co-operative adult life.

In what lessons do YOU group children together? What opportunities do YOU provide for them to work on some topic in little 'gangs'? Arithmetic? Reading? Charts? Models? Collections?

4. *They like COLLECTING things*

This may not be such an important habit as the others, but it is certainly a habit which we should use. Children will go to extraordinary lengths to acquire anything under the sun. Provided those lengths are legal, we can encourage them to build up collections arising from much of our teaching. Pictures, cuttings, objects, and books in connection with almost any subject; stamps, postmarks, plants, flowers, packets, tins, match-boxes, bits of wood, price-tickets, bus-tickets, etc., in connection with Geography, Nature Study, Arithmetic, and Handwork.

There are few lessons which cannot be preceded or followed by: "Who can bring . . .?"

How often do YOU say that?

5. *They are UN-SELF-CONSCIOUS*

A few Primary children are shy, but most of them are nothing like as backward in coming forward as are Secondary children. They will speak freely and spontaneously, *unless they have been previously repressed.*

Surely this tendency should be encouraged. Though at times it produces the irrepressible 'know-all', with most children the opportunity to speak, act, and demonstrate things in front of others is excellent training in self-confidence.

How does YOUR class fare in this?

6. *They are bursting with ENERGY*

The harassed adult envies the energy of children. Yet many a harassed teacher keeps a firm thumb on that energy in the classroom all day. Bottled-up physical effort is bound to break out in other ways, so we have the common sight of the most repressed children being the least well-disciplined out of school.

We must therefore give some opportunity for actual bodily movement. Physical Training, Games, and playtime cater for this to a large extent, but we should also consider whether children should be allowed to move about the room more in certain lessons, particularly Handwork and Art. And we should ask ourselves whether sitting at a desk is the *invariable* procedure in other lessons, too.

Do YOU—but you know my question by now!

. . . .

Well, these are the main characteristics of Primary children. They have others, which you will no doubt have noticed. But you'll be asking by now: "So what? We can read these things in a psychology book!"

I know. I suggested that myself. But if you look back, you'll see that I gave very little space to the psychology part. Under each heading I spent most of the time suggesting what that particular characteristic meant *in terms of the classroom.* And each time I asked you a question.

If you answer these questions honestly you will be winning the battle against 'tags', 'stunts', and over-eager enthusiasts. For you will be constructing your own special approach, unharmed by fancy names, wild ideas, or uninformed cranks.

You will, in fact, be working out your own 'modern method', based on the only sensible foundation—the children.

Call it the Oopazoodic Method or the Oojiboo System if you like. It doesn't really matter, for it's sure to be misunderstood by others in a few weeks. But the biggest thought at the back of your mind will be this: "*Is there any sense in changing my present methods AT ALL?*"

Well, in the next chapter, let's think about *that.*

CHAPTER III

CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

It's all very well for me to wax cynical about antagonisms and misunderstandings where 'modern methods' are concerned, but when anything in this world is put forward as an 'improvement' it must first be shown that its predecessors are in fact open to improvement.

I've already hinted, when I looked at children, that their characteristics demand different attitudes from those still common. So here I'd like to examine the sort of things which go on in schools today; and by suggesting what else *might* be happening I'll leave you to judge whether present methods are all right.

Let's visit a school.

You'll perhaps disagree with some of my descriptions. You'll say: "That doesn't happen in *my* class." All right: take a point for your team each time! Or, if you like, let's pretend that I'm imagining it all; but let's have a look, all the same.

The Classroom

As it is

It has rows of desks, nicely arranged in columns with gangways, rather like soldiers on parade. There are a few flowers in undisguised jam-jars on the window-ledges. Two pictures, inherited from long-departed teachers, hang precariously on the walls, the rest of the space being cold and cheerless. The cupboard, with an enormous pile of junk on the top, is full of sets of text-books—fifty to a set. The blackboard is grey and smeared. Some open shelves contain more junk, and a few lonely-looking milk bottle tops surround a battered waste-paper basket. A table (aren't they lucky?) contains a few odds and ends of pots, brushes, and paste. The teacher's chair (watch that shaky leg!) rests behind a desk in which nothing can ever be found for the piles of notes from parents.

As it might be

The desks might be arranged more informally to allow for group-work and a more intimate atmosphere. It's surprising, too, how much extra floor-space can be wrested from nowhere. Jam-jars might be painted, hidden in baskets, or even thrown away in favour of real vases. The dingiest walls might be covered with bright pictures, children's work, charts, friezes, and collections—so long as they're changed often. The cupboard-top could be cleared (the most amazing treasures often lurk there!). Some of the sets of text-books might in time be replaced by single copies of interesting books, which could be put on the open shelves (de-junked) to form a class library. The blackboard might be repainted with blackboard paint, and the table used for a group-model or nature specimens. Even the teacher's desk . . . but we'll forget about that!

The Children

As they are

They're *good* children at this school. They march in lines, sit up straight, fold their arms, and listen—or at least, they appear to be listening. They arrange their books neatly under the desks, all exactly the same. They speak when spoken to, move out of their places only when told, turn to the correct page in the text-book, and never lose the place. Their exercise-books are a model; margins are all the same width, dates in the same places, figures and handwriting done to a pattern. There are no dog-ears or inky covers, for exercise-books must *never* be put under the inkwell side of the desk.

There are two extremely efficient monitors, and no other children are allowed to do any jobs in the classroom.

As they might be

Well, it seems a pity to spoil them, doesn't it? But however valuable neatness and quietness and obedience may be, there's such a thing as overdoing them *with young children*. They might therefore be allowed to move about quietly at times. They might be allowed more comfortable positions when writing, drawing, or making things. They might be permitted to talk to each other in some lessons, and contribute more to *all* lessons. They might even work on different pages in text-books, according to ability, and they might be allowed to read books of their own choice on occasions. They might be allowed, within reason, to develop their own styles of figures, handwriting, and exercise-book arrangement. And they each might be allowed a share in the many jobs there are in a classroom.

Not utter freedom, mind you. But a certain amount of initiative combined with a certain amount of control can do far more good than complete repression. Children can still be 'good' and quiet and neat, yet they can be allowed to develop minds of their own rather than the minds of robots.

The Teacher

As he is

(I'm using the neutral 'he' without prejudice, for it may equally well be 'she'!)

Well, this teacher *teaches*. He lectures away happily, lesson after lesson, standing well back from the class. He marks all the written work meticulously—into the small hours—and keeps a very careful marks-list, which is read out solemnly every Monday morning. He observes the time-table strictly, and is very stern if any child talks or moves when he should be sitting up.

He sets the subjects for paintings and compositions, gives out the text-book pages, and in general dictates the classroom routine thoroughly, minute by minute. Everything runs on oiled wheels, if you can call it 'running'.

As he might be

He might, of course, sit back sometimes and listen to the children. He might organise group activities, while he moves around advising. He might go *into* the class occasionally. He might allow children to mark their own work at times, and give more stress to individual achievements and less to class order of merit. He might be rather less stern in exciting lessons, and even let some of them overrun other subjects. He might permit children to draw, make, and write about subjects of their own choice when they wish. And he might allow the children to have at least *some* say in what goes on in the room.

The Time-table

As it is

It's really a beautiful piece of machinery, with all the cogs fitting together. Even the English and Arithmetic are carefully subdivided and allotted time accordingly. Bells ring for change of lesson, and woe betide the teacher caught carrying on after the bell has rung.

As it might be

Well, it might be less of a master and more of a servant. It could be regarded more as a guide than anything—a rough framework to be used at the teacher's discretion. If a topic is particularly interesting, it might be allowed to go on until the interest wanes.

And, more than anything, the time-table might include a number of periods devoted to the *children*, rather than to specific subjects.

The Syllabus

As it is

I really haven't time to describe this in detail, but here are a few random samples:

Arithmetic goes by text-book exercises, building up the four rules in number and money. 'Problems' are also mentioned. Geography is based on a text-book, and deals with Australia, Zulus, Red Indians, and, I suspect, the Man in the Moon. History, also, deals with remote people like Alfred the Great and William the Conqueror.

The Handwork syllabus lays down a number of models to be completed, with details of materials and measurements. Art, too, is carefully laid out, subject by subject.

There is, in fact, no excuse for the teacher to be in any way at a loss for 'what comes next?' It's all there, in black and white (or perhaps it's a little faded by now!).

As it might be

There might be less rigidity in it. It might give more opportunity for work in which the children are interested—trains and farms and shops and rabbits. It might remember that Arithmetic is real, and not two separate departments, 'number' and 'problems'. It might mention Geography which is connected with the child's environment, and History which has some link with his life. It might give an opportunity for the children to *create* something in Handwork and Art, rather than constantly making things to order.

It might, in other words, deal less with 'subjects' and more with *children*.

. . . . .

Well, I think that's enough to be going on with. Perhaps, even, you recognise a few things among the sections '*As it is*'. And I certainly hope the sections '*As it might be*' have given you something to think about.

What Are You Trying To Do?

Let's turn now to a very relevant question, if we want to discover whether the right sorts of things are going on in schools. And it is this: *Why are children at school at all?*

As with many things, the teacher in the classroom may often be far too busy to pause and ask this question. May I earnestly suggest that you *do* at times ask it? For no teaching method, however much it thinks of the children, can be satisfactory unless it is concerned with this aspect, too.

Now the aims of education is a forbidding subject, but may I attempt to define them as simply as possible, as far as the Primary School is concerned?

I believe that the children in your class are there for four reasons:

(i) *To Learn to Live in a Community*

Though more positive training in 'Citizenship' is the job of the Secondary School, younger children, too, should be trained to live and work amicably with each other. They should learn the value of co-operation, decent behaviour, give and take; and begin to develop self-confidence and initiative. They should see in a simple way that everybody has a place in any community, and that this place involves duties as well as rights.

That's all very airy-fairy, but in terms of the classroom it means that the children should be allowed to work together in small groups; to read, act, talk, make models, and so on.

They should learn good manners in school and out, so that the larger communities of class, school, and village or town mean something to them, too. They should be allowed to take a share in the duties of the classroom, and be trusted to carry out that share. And they should be allowed initiative in much of the work they do, rather than being constantly spoon-fed; for a spoon-fed child is likely to be a worthless 'passenger' in a community.

How about *your* children in *your* classroom?

(ii) *To Acquire Some Basic Knowledge*

Perhaps some of the wilder enthusiasts forget this. All the same, children without doubt walk into your classroom partly for the purpose of receiving some definite tools for use in life. Among these tools are:

(*a*) The ability to *speak* clearly and confidently;
(*b*) The ability to *read*;
(*c*) The ability to express themselves in *writing*;
(*d*) The ability to do simple *arithmetic*;
(*e*) *Integrity*;
(*f*) *Self-confidence* in the presence of others;
(*g*) *Initiative*, so that they can be trusted to do a job.

(You may add also, as do the Winnetka Schools, certain basic facts in Geography and History as being necessary for life.)

My earlier subdivisions of this aim of your teaching are easy enough as far as the classroom is concerned. They simply mean that you must train children to speak, read, write, and do Arithmetic. And those tasks, though you probably don't believe it, are easier than the other subdivisions.

Integrity can be developed through trust by *you*. The majority of children will respond to such trust. If they are allowed to work on their own, to get their own books and materials, to take work home, and so on, they will, with few exceptions, prove that they can in fact be trusted.

Self-confidence, too, is developed through trust; through permitting children to do some of the things they want to do;

and through letting them lead groups, talk to the class, do jobs, act, arrange cupboards and libraries, etc.

Initiative arises from similar activities; for a child with self-confidence is likely to be a child with ideas of his own and the energy to carry them out.

What of *your* children? Speaking, reading, writing, arithmetic—yes. But what of the other 'tools'?

(iii) *To Live a Full and Enjoyable Life Now*

Yes, don't let's dwell on the future all the time. These children are alive *now*, and they are living the busiest years of their lives. If those years are not filled by us in an interesting and useful fashion, they will certainly be filled by the children, and often in the wrong ways.

How are we to fill these years? Some of the things I have mentioned already will keep children busy and happy. They need, too, much information about the world which is growing in their mind. They must be allowed to see much, read much, hear much; they must make things, talk about things, discover things; they should create pictures and pieces of craftsmanship, and learn something of literature and music.

Do *your* children enjoy a full life in school?

(iv) *To be Prepared for Secondary Education*

I'm on dangerous ground here, for the 'scholarship' pops up eternally in the upper classes of the Primary School. But I do *not* mean preparation only for the Secondary Grammar School.

Our duty to children in this respect is to give them a reasonable grounding of knowledge, particularly in tool subjects; but also to allow them to feel the skill they have in their hands, and to give them some basic hand-and-eye training; and—again—to give them self-confidence and initiative.

Thus they should be prepared for whatever form of Secondary School proves most suitable for them.

Do *you* think of this? Or do you look only to the academic work and the Grammar School?

. . . . .

Those, I think, are the main reasons for the presence of the children in front of you every day. And when you consider them, and turn your eyes also to the children, some very interesting requirements emerge—requirements rather different from the ones implied in the school picture shown earlier in this chapter.

Four Basic Needs

(i) *You Must Give Children Activity*

All the evidence points to this—the children's energy, curiosity, and creative desires; the dreariness of much alleged 'teaching'; and the need for children to live a full life, mentally and physically, to be prepared for any form of secondary education, and to learn to live in a community. It is essential, because of these things, for them to *use* their mental and physical powers in an active rather than a passive way.

(ii) *You Must Encourage Their Initiative*

Their curiosity and creativeness, if nothing else, demand this. But so does the deadening atmosphere of many classrooms, where the children are hardly allowed to speak a word or do a thing off their own bats. And so, more than anything, does their need for community training, and the tools of life. A person without initiative is a dead person, kicked about by all.

(iii) *You Must Keep Control*

By this I mean not only discipline, in the shape of class control, but also control of the children's progress in learning.

You must know how they are getting along in your basic subject teaching, and you must be the leader and director in all the other activities. Children need this leadership, and they need this measurement of progress.

(iv) *You Must Teach Them Some Facts*

I refer here to the 'basic subjects' which children need for their job in life, for their Secondary School and for their place in the adult world. No teaching method, if it has any value at all, should ignore this need.

. . . . .

I've tried to show, then, that there must be a BALANCE in your method of teaching, whether you call it 'modern' or 'old-fashioned'. There must be some freedom to develop activity and initiative, and there must be some control and teaching of basic facts.

In other words, there must not be fanaticism in either direction.

Could you, perhaps, examine *your* methods for this balance?

CHAPTER IV

SOME PRELIMINARY PLANS

I'VE tried to show, so far, that any good 'modern method' is based first on the children; it then takes into account present conditions, considers the aims of teaching, and tries to strike a balance with the aid of all these factors.

But in striving for this balance the teacher always comes up against the question: *What exactly am I going to do in the classroom?*

I've suggested in many ways the kinds of *happenings* which arise naturally from the above considerations, but what about the *subjects* you teach—the contents of your syllabus?

Let's look at these for a moment, for among thinking teachers there's almost as much reaction to the normal subjects as there is to the normal methods.

'Subjects'

You see, it's so ingrained in our inheritance that School means History, Geography, Arithmetic, Nature Study, and so on, that we forget that perhaps things don't fall into such beautiful compartments for children.

As far as they're concerned, in fact, there is only *one* subject—the world in which they live. They don't stop to put everything they see into categories—at least not until they've been 'got at' for some years by school syllabuses. They take things as they come, whatever 'subject' they belong to.

Why, then, do we subdivide this world of theirs as we do?

There are, of course, logical reasons for the traditional subjects. People have always realised that there is only one 'subject' in life, but they long ago realised also that the world is far too complex to be studied as one unit. It must therefore be 'broken down'. And gradually there have evolved the subjects we know.

English was the label given to the 'communications' side of life, and that in its turn has been further subdivided for convenience. *Geography* was the subdivision which dealt with the physical and human aspects of lands and life. The study of how things became what they are was labelled *History*. Knowledge of plant and animal life has come to be called *Nature Study*, or when it is combined with a wider study of natural substances, and the queer things man does with them, it is called *Science*. *Mathematics* deals with man-made figure-complications in the world. Then we have the cultural labels, which concern themselves with things developed by man's superior intelligence—*Art*, *Craft*, and *Music*.

These labels are all very well as far as adults are concerned, but it is slowly coming to be realised that they are not always suitable for children. This realisation is *one* of the reasons for the Projects, Centres of Interest, Combined Studies, and so on, which have crept into schools in many parts of the country and of the world.

Well, what subjects *should* a child learn?

Perhaps we could *ask* children! But surely any teacher can answer the question from his own knowledge of them! Children—in the Primary School—are interested in traffic and trains and shops and animals and policemen and—well, in almost everything they come across.

Why don't we do something about this fact? Why don't we divide up the time-table and the syllabus into 'child-subjects'?

Well, there are two answers to those questions:

1. 'Modern methods' *do*, in fact, do something about it. They always seek to bring many 'child-subjects' into the curriculum, and to set apart time-table time for such studies and activities.

2. BUT—what a child wants to learn isn't necessarily best for him *all the time*, and it is necessary also to teach him a groundwork of the traditional subjects.

I believe any rational enthusiast will concede that second point. But I *have* come across people so intent on 'child-subjects' that they insisted on dragging a Project into every conceivable type of lesson, until the children were heartily sick of it!

A 'THREE-POINT BALANCE' OF WORK

Well, now, perhaps I can set down tentatively the lines on which a 'modern' syllabus might be drawn up, taking into consideration the facts I have so far put forward.

I believe, then, that three main types of work can be done in schools:

(i) Basic subject teaching;
(ii) Class lessons on other subjects and 'child-subjects' ('Teacher's Time');
(iii) 'Children's Time' for various activities.

Let me develop each of these, with the classroom in mind.

Basic Subject Teaching

Speech, Reading, Written Expression, and Arithmetic must have definite times on the time-table, and definite syllabuses from which the teacher will work.

In each case there is much hard learning for the child to do. Nevertheless, that learning can be far more lively and active, even in these basic subjects, than we are perhaps accustomed to. I have hinted already at what I mean by this, but perhaps a few questions for you to ask yourself will make it clearer.

Speech

(*a*) Do your children speak jingles, vowel and consonant-sounds, poetry and plays to your prescription, or do you let them *make up* poems and plays, sentences and jingles?

(*b*) How closely is your speech-training connected with other topics, and how much do you allow children to *choose* what they say for practice?

Reading

(*c*) How much do you cater for various reading abilities in your class, by means of groups and a wide choice of books?

(*d*) How much opportunity do your children get to read for enjoyment?

(*e*) Have you a school or class library, and do you encourage children to borrow from the public library, bring books to school, and always have one under their desks?

(*f*) Do you encourage them to search in books for information about other school topics?

Written Work

(*g*) How much written expression follows naturally from other work, and how much is quite unconnected, laid down by you on the spur of the moment?

(*h*) Do your children write real letters, run a class magazine or newspaper (with stories, reports, poems, etc.), review books, and describe their discoveries for others in the class?

(*i*) How much written work is produced for purposes other than your red pencil?

Arithmetic

(*j*) Is your Arithmetic a dreary working through of text-book exercises, or are your lessons varied, interesting, and largely realistic?

(*k*) Do you ensure that at some time *in each Arithmetic lesson* a piece of real application is attempted—with counters, beads, rulers, weights, money, etc.?

Those questions are not intended to suggest every type of active basic subject work, but they should lead your thoughts on.

'Teacher's Time'

This section of the syllabus will include 'technique' lessons in Art, Craft, and Music, and—for the diehards—skeleton schemes in History, Geography, and Nature Study. But also it will contain many lessons arising from 'child-subjects' in your syllabus.

Thus, if you are doing a Centre of Interest on 'Ships', you will need lessons devoted to Viking ships, a trip to South Africa, making a chart of the trip, singing sea-shanties, etc. (Those lessons *could* be called History, Geography, Handwork, and Music respectively!)

Again, these class lessons will be much more active than is normal. The children will take a much fuller share in them by speaking, acting, drawing, making things, looking things up, writing, etc. There will be continual *application* of the basic subjects.

'Children's Time'

This is perhaps the 'revolutionary' section—periods in which the children are free to follow up ideas which have developed in the 'teacher's time' described above.

I'll describe rather more fully, then, what I mean by this suggested section of the time-table.

I am *not* saying that you should hand the school over to the children. Nor am I saying that the child is always right. But I *am* saying that on all time-tables there should be two or three periods called 'CHILDREN'S TIME', and that those periods should belong to the children, with only one proviso: *they must not inconvenience others.*

Basically that suggestion is perfectly feasible. You have the time, and there's no law saying that it must be divided up in any particular way. But 'subject-minded' teachers will shudder at the thought of a space without a 'subject' in it, and very many teachers will say: "All right—but what will the children *do*?"

Children will do one or more of these things:

> Read; write; make something; paint, draw, or trace; do arithmetic; play number and word games (Ludo, Lexicon, etc.); mime; act; talk; make a noise; argue; fight.

If you look at that list you must admit that the majority of occupations are definite pieces of learning, and even the last four have some educational value. But those four are ruled out by *your* one proviso: *Other children must not be inconvenienced.* So that noise, etc., must be dispensed with, or at least saved for outside use. This leaves no activity which is not of benefit to the child.

"Right," you may say. "Granted that they *are* doing those things, the vast majority will be merely idly drawing, fiddling with Plasticine, or reading comics—the lines of least resistance. And while they're not exactly wasting their time, I'm jolly sure that I could be doing a lot more good if I got them all down to vulgar fractions."

Now this is where *you* come in, and become for once a leader rather than a lecturer. For during the 'Children's Time' periods your job is to help all children to get the most out of what they are doing. And I might say that it's a fascinating change from teaching, though it may seem queer not having to stand in front and spout.

You move about the class, and you *make suggestions.* Little Johnny is wading slowly through all the pictures in a pile of *Beanos*; you suggest that he makes himself a comic, with his own pictures and words. Mary is weaving away at the pattern which she has been doing for weeks—about as exciting as nut-on-bolt factory work; you suggest that she has a rest and writes a letter to her friend Joan in hospital. Tommy is drawing his fourteenth trolley-bus; you suggest that he makes a little book about 'Things on Wheels', with pictures and writing.

Wishful thinking? Not a bit of it! It happens every day, and I've seen it happen in classes whose teacher swore it never could.

But it's the *first* time that's tricky, for the natural reaction of a class that has never raised a finger without the teacher saying so is to run a bit wild if given time of their own.

They should therefore be told in words to this effect:

We're going to have something different today. Now you all like some things in school better than others, don't you? What do you like, Johnny . . .? Mary . . .? Billy . . .?

Now, IF you can get things quietly, and IF you don't disturb others, you can now do what you like doing best (momentous pause). *CAN you do that?* (further momentous pause). *Right . . . off you go, and let's see who's busy first.*

If you've said this in the right way, and the final bit very quietly, you'll be astonished how quickly and quietly the children will get things and start, with a mixture of pride, self-satisfaction, and awe. At last teacher has realised that they have opinions, responsibilities, and likes of their own!

I am *not* painting pretty pictures. I'm describing real happenings with real children all over the country, and many of my readers will be laughing at the thought that there may be others who haven't yet found the solid learning which can happen in this sort of period.

There are, of course, one or two prerequisites for such work. For one thing, you must be on reasonably good terms with your class, and not be holding a perpetual dog-fight for discipline. And for another, children must be used to getting brushes, colours, etc., and using stock sensibly.

But perhaps the most important requirement for the maximum success of 'Children's Time' is that you must be doing interesting work in 'Teacher's Time'! If you are showing children how to enjoy reading, writing, tackling arithmetic problems, thinking out how to make things, finding out about the world, and so on, they just won't be able to wait for their own time in which to follow up those interests. For, as you'll have spotted, 'Children's Time' is *not* a time for forbidden fruit. It's a time for following up *your* work.

. . . .

Well, I've rather let myself go over 'Children's Time', for that is perhaps the trickiest one of my three types of work.

I'll conclude this chapter with six suggestions to you—suggestions for 'making a start'. *But don't try them all at once*!

Making a Start

(i) *Stop reading this book and think about your next lesson*

What were you intending to do? More than that, what were the *children* going to do? Is that the most interesting method you could think of? Can you give the children more chance to *learn* in a natural way, or can *you* approach your subject in a more realistic manner? And can you change your approach so that the children will really think the lesson is worth having?

Such questions—particularly that one about "What are the *children* going to do?"—should begin to enter your head with *every* lesson. For only thus can you begin any new approach which will have real value.

(ii) *Shuffle the Furniture Around*

Yes, is there anything more soul-destroying than rows and columns of desks? Move them about, then, into smaller collections where groups can meet, and among which you can move informally instead of reigning at the front. You'll find there's little trouble in 'seeing the board', or 'looking at you', and you'll even conjure up more floor-space.

(And while you're at it, how about those tattered pictures and that cupboard-top junk?—but see the next chapter!)

(iii) *Introduce More Group Work*

Reading-groups, of course; but how about spelling-groups, dramatisation-groups, table-groups, model-making groups, chart-groups, and collection-groups? Remember the children's tendency to 'get together', their delight in creating things; and see what you can do about it.

This type of work introduces children, too, to the habit of working on their own, a stage removed from your control. And this is a valuable training for life.

(iv) *Introduce 'Children's Time'*

Perhaps you've had this already, unknowingly, on Friday afternoons. But did you notice what the children *did*? I'll guarantee that ninety per cent of them were actively learning something they wanted to learn—reading, playing Ludo, writing, drawing, making things.

Turn this, or some other period, into official 'Children's Time', in which they can do what they like so long as it doesn't interfere with others. And of course suggest many activities to them which arise from other lessons.

(v) *Introduce 'Child-subjects' in Spare Time*

Let the children start a collection of stamps; a chart of pictures and cuttings of some current event such as cup-ties; an aquarium, a magazine, a shop, a library—and work on any such topic or activity which attracts them.

They will take an intense interest in these things, both at home and in spare time at school, and you will get a glimpse of real 'learning by experience'.

(vi) *Introduce 'Child-subjects' into the Time-table*

Give lesson-time and 'Children's Time' to these hobbies and interests. Draw up schemes around Topics, Centres of Interest, or whatever label you are using. Bring in the subjects which come in naturally, and carry on normal but more active work in the others. *But keep on teaching the basic subjects in as realistic a way as you can.*

. . . . .

By far the most important of the above six suggestions is the first. Without it the others are useless. But by the time you've made use of all six your classroom will be alive. You'll be working on lines natural to the children, yet you will still have ample solid teaching to do.

May I finish with a plea?

It is this: However near to 'modern methods' you believe *your* methods to be, will you find yourself a quiet spot one day and give the whole business a good thinking over?

It's really worth it, for ruts are deepened by people who never bother to watch where the horse is pulling them. And only *you* can do anything about *your* little rut, if you have one.

In the next chapter I'll put forward a few practical ideas for the classroom, and then we'll go and see a class at work.

CHAPTER V

SOME PRACTICAL IDEAS

Ideas for the Classroom

IF you want enjoyable teaching, you must have a pleasant atmosphere. So let's see what can be done about that.

Yes, I know all about ancient buildings, and floors thick with the grease of time, and desks dotted with carved initials; but I still say that something *can* be done.

Get Rid of Junk

Take a look, for example, at the general state of the classroom. That pile of junk on top of the cupboard, the lumber pushed into a corner, the ancient tattered remnants of generations of predecessors—you were going to sort it out one day, I know, *but why not do it now*? Why not throw out all the odds and ends that tend to accumulate everywhere, and start with a clean sheet? You'll get a wonderful feeling of satisfaction, and above all, you'll have cleared the decks for other things. Here they come.

Brighten the Walls

Children are faced by their classroom walls for a very large part of their waking lives. We *must not* leave those walls drab and bare. Here are a few thoughts for dealing with them:

FRAMED PICTURES.—Valuable, but dangerous; for, once there, they tend to stay for ever. (That's a big danger with *everything* on classroom walls!) But one or two pleasant paintings have their effect on the child, provided they're not jostled too much by other material. It's not always possible to organise a wide system of changing them, but at least you can *exchange them with other classrooms*, and *change their positions at times*.

If money is available, 'School Prints' provide pleasing and bright alternatives to "The Boyhood of Raleigh" and "When Did You Last See Your Father?" And 'School Prints' appeal much more to children of this age.

COLLECTIONS.—Have the children a stretch of wall *of their own*? It gives them a stake in the room, and it can be used for endless 'collection' purposes—pictures and cuttings connected with lessons; leaves, stamps, and the similar spare-time interests which should exist in every class.

MURALS.—It depends on the ability of the staff, but if a bright and lively artist can be found to do large mural paintings on dingy walls, so much the better. The disadvantage lies in their permanency. For this reason, the assembly hall, if any, is perhaps the best place for them.

WALL NEWSPAPER.—Again an attractive feature, which belongs to the children. Each child can contribute stories, pictures, or designs. Yes, they'll be crude at first, but does it matter? Watch them improve every week!

POSTERS.—There are many of these easily obtainable. The Dental Board ones on teeth, the R.S.P.A. Road Safety ones, and the various travel agency pictures, come to mind. But *change them continually*, and *use them when they're showing*.

LESSON ILLUSTRATIONS.—Every teacher has a collection of teaching-aid pictures (or am I wrong?). Do you put them up before the lessons concerned, and then incorporate them in a progressively growing picture of the work that is being done? Such a growth, constantly added to, *constantly referred to*, can bring unity into schemes at the same time as it brightens the walls.

GENERAL INTEREST.—Are there always in front of the children one or two continually used pieces of apparatus? A map of the district (it fascinates them!), a daily weather-chart, a table-clock or chart, a row of shop goods at various prices for odd mental arithmetic, a dummy clock (don't they find *time* difficult?) and so on.

CHILDREN'S WORK (PAINTINGS, DESIGNS, ETC.).—Yes. But keep it limited, and keep replacing it. Make it an honour for a child's work to brighten up the walls.

. . . . .

Well, those are a few ideas for the classroom walls. They're not exhaustive, but surely among them there's something for *you*. The rule is: *keep the walls alive*; and that means *keep changing things*. (It's funny, you know, how much more difficult it is to take things down than it was to put them up!)

It's so easy to get used to depressing surroundings, and to become, like a chameleon, part of them.

Use 'Nature'

I've already mentioned leaf collections on the walls, but the garden and the countryside and the park can, and should, play a much bigger part in the child's environment. No room, particularly in towns, should be without its bulbs or other seeds in season, its vases of flowers and sprays of leaves, its aquarium if possible, its 'tin-lid' garden.

The children take a delight in bringing things and looking after them, and the teacher doesn't need a deep knowledge of Natural Science to guide their inquisitive minds to a continual flow of subjects, winter and summer.

Bulbs and sticky-buds start off the year, followed by pussy-willow and other catkins; then comes the spate of flowers and the growing of wheat, peas, and beans. In the autumn fascinating seed collections help to decorate the room, with evergreens to help out into winter.

I shall say more about the need for and scope of a *nature table* later in this book.

Use Colour

Yes, it's another fine ally in the fight against drabness. Have bright designs on exercise-book covers (an *A*, in team-colour, on the Arithmetic one, for example) and on library book covers. Desks can be labelled with cheerful numbers or letters. Team-point charts should be colourful, and team bands and badges will all help in bringing those brief but effective touches of cheer to the room.

Notices and labels in particular—on the walls, shelves, entrance door, notice-boards and the current collections—can be done on gay pastel paper just as easily as on white. And, incidentally, it's worth a teacher's while to put in a bit of lettering practice to help with these notices. Such remarks as "What did you find on your way to school?" or "Can you find your way about this map of our town?" look so much better if done in simple broad- or ball-pen lettering, or in Marion Richardson handwriting.

Descriptive details on models or charts, group-number labels in sets of readers, current sketches, poems, etc., on the blackboard (if you're lucky enough to have a big one)—these are a few more of the opportunities for using colour and pleasing lettering.

And, by the way, do you *always* use only *white* chalk?

Sort Out the Apparatus

In addition to the questions of walls, shelves, and so on, there are few classrooms where the business of apparatus couldn't do with a little thought.

When did you last have the *blackboard* repainted, for example? Even the slate type goes grey in time, and the rougher wooden ones need frequent coats of blackboard 'paint' to keep them fresh-looking and effective.

And what about arithmetic apparatus? Have you a collection of material to make your arithmetic realistic? I mean shop goods with prices on them, scales, cardboard coins, strips of wood of various lengths, milk bottles or similar measures of different capacities, the clock mentioned earlier, and, for older children, fraction-strip trays, with plenty of beads and cubes for the younger ones.

A useful idea is to paint on the wall a height scale, marked in feet and inches; it delights the children. A square yard painted on the floor, with square feet superimposed, and perhaps 144 square inches in one of them, makes a valuable and durable contribution to area work. Lots of children 'learn' about square yards without ever seeing one!

While we're thinking about apparatus, it's perhaps as well to check over the taken-for-granted items. Blackboard ruler and compasses? Maps? (But please throw away these flat maps of the world. The projection is much too confusing for the Primary School child. Use a globe! You'll find one somewhere!) Cloths for spilt milk and colours? Jam-jars and meat-paste jars for many things? All those little boxes for colour-pots, rulers, straws, drawing-pins, rubbers, brushes? (Or do you prefer a jumble in the bottom of the cupboard?)

. . . . .

Well, could you perhaps look around *your* classroom, and see what you think about things? And don't forget what I suggested in the previous chapter about desk arrangement!

Ideas for the Children

It's a great big wonderful world to the Primary School child. He's left the rather helpless infant stage, and he finds himself strong and tireless, with the horizon within his grasp. So, like the Elephant's Child, he develops a "satiable curtiosity".

Seize it! For it can be the key to all your work. Instead of hammering in facts, as of old, the teacher of today leads the child to grasp knowledge of his own free will, *because that's what he wants to do!*

This fact, of course, applies to all teaching, but I'm limiting myself here to a few concrete ideas which show concrete results of curiosity inspired by the teacher.

1. *Use the Child's Curiosity*

The first point I'd stress is the need to break down the 'Iron Curtain' between school and home. How often do you remember that every child has a home, parents, perhaps a garden and books, playmates, favourite activities, and so on? And all the combinations are different!

We *do* tend to forget about this out-of-school existence of the child, you know. It's so easy. But it's just as easy to remember it every day, and *to do something to link it with his in-school life.*

I mean this sort of thing: suppose the child's having a lesson on the Glastonbury lake village; well, why not conclude by saying:

"That's how *those* people lived. Now, when you get home, have a good look round *your house*, and tell us tomorrow how it's different from the houses we've just heard about."

You see the point? Some of the children (others will forget!) will nose around their own houses, asking questions and *noticing things they've never thought of before.*

Or again, after a lesson, say, on 'Fishermen', try saying:

"That's *one* way of working, so that people can have more food. Now to-night, if you can remember, try to find out the work done by all the grown-ups you know, and see how *that* helps other people."

Once more the child is trying to put his curiosity to work, and is asking himself *why* Mr. Jones cleans out sewers, and how Mr. Smith's job as a barrow-boy benefits the community.

Over and over again these opportunities are there, ready-made, if we'd only make use of them. And in any case, we can always say: "See what you can find out about . . . for to-morrow." For a surprising number of parents are only too anxious to help, if we give them the chance.

Every day, too, familiar out-of-school things are mentioned in passing: railway engines, postmen, drains, bicycles, ration books, cinemas, cauliflowers, babies' bottles, Wellington boots. Every time, a hint can be dropped that they're worth looking at closely. And much more time could be given for the child to write and talk about the results of his investigations.

But no! We can't waste the time-table like that, can we? Or can we?

2. *Use the Passion for 'Collecting'*

Remember the passion the child has for collecting things, as one outlet for his curiosity? Well, here are a few ideas that can be casually started by you, but which will grow like snowballs with very little pushing:

POSTMARKS.—Johnny's auntie lives in Newcastle. Johnny wrote her a letter the other day, surprisingly better than his usual (purposeless!) 'compositions'. She replied. (Exhibit 'A'). Can we tell where the letter came from without opening it? Yes . . . etc., etc. Funny, isn't it, to think of those machines or hand-stamps all over the world marking letters day after day! Let's see how many we can collect!

And in they come, often with the aid of office-worker fathers grubbing in waste-paper baskets! 'Postmen' will be required to be responsible for different counties, with perhaps others for various continents. You'll need to arrange for a folio, or 'county sheets' around a map of England on the wall, with strings from each sheet to the appropriate county.

Leeds? They make a lot of cloth and suits there. Boston? Very flat, lots of potatoes grown round about. New York? . . .

(But steady! They'll be doing this when they ought to be learning tables! And anyhow, it will interfere with the Geography syllabus! Tcha!)

COINS.—"These awful ha'pennies and sixpences and half-crowns! How would you like to spend money like this?" (Holding up an Indian 'pice' with a hole in it (loud laughter!).) "Has anybody else got any foreign money?"

Yes, dozens and dozens of coins. Again, table-space or tins will be needed, in charge of children. Labelling in gay colours to be done, and once more you're in the throes of absorbing curiosity. (Yes, and it'll stump *you*, too, sometimes!)

South African shilling? Where on earth's South Africa? . . . And so on.

NATURE COLLECTIONS.—I've mentioned the seasonal progression of these already. Again the organisation can be shared among the children. There'll be such jobs as watering, water-changing, dusting, cleaning out old material, labelling, as well as neat arranging. Don't forget, too, the name of the child who brought each article; it's a wonderful incentive. The place where it was found can also go on the label.

OTHER POSSIBILITIES.—Quite apart from collections connected with the class syllabus, which I shall mention later, there are many spare-time collections similar to the above.

I hope I've given enough ideas on the general approach for you to be able to apply it to other types.

Here are some:

Match-box tops; holiday photographs; railway, car, and bus numbers; picture postcards; shop goods; cigarette cards (there are still many about); news cuttings and pictures; cigarette packets; pictures of animals, butterflies, birds, engines, cars, people; pebbles; birds' eggs (but take it easy!); and, of course, *stamps*!

. . . . .

It doesn't matter if some of these things aren't connected with the syllabus. It's the *child* you're teaching, and he's an inquisitive child. So encourage him to be interested in things both in school and out. And if it takes up some of your arithmetic time, what matter? He's learning something the right way, without the need for hammer and chisel.

But if you *must* do Arithmetic from 9.30 to 10.30—well, let him collect bus time-tables, tickets, and fare-lists, and *do* Arithmetic!

3. *Use the Desire to Create Things*

Soap-boxes on wheels, scarves for a doll, Meccano cranes, monkeys climbing sticks, posies for Mother, daisy-chains—they're all part of the child's life, just as they were part of ours when we were young.

How can we use this desire to *create* things?

THE METHOD.—Handwork is the official answer, and it is interpreted in many ways in the Primary School: sewing, knitting, paper and card work, bookbinding, Plasticine, clay, weaving basketry, puppetry, and so on.

All these can be valuable media, but I'd like to put in a few hard words about the *methods* so often used in teaching them.

Take a paper-work lesson. Doesn't it often start like this:

"Today we're going to make an envelope. You've all got a piece of paper, so pick up your rulers and pencils and make a mark two inches from the long edge. . . . No! I said the *long* edge! . . ."—and so on?

Now, let's be honest about this type of lesson. *Who is making the envelope?* I say it's the *teacher*. It's *his* envelope from start to finish. The child has merely followed a succession of instructions, and the class has churned out a lot of envelopes with no more individuality than the productions of a factory-belt (except where instructions were not obeyed!) And it's the same with the seed-packets, book-marks, and the rest.

There *is* a place for this sort of handwork, but I suggest that the class must first understand that the primary aim is *not* the production of an envelope. The aim, *which should be stated*, is practice in measuring, drawing lines, folding, cutting, using paste, and keeping work clean. If the child understands that proficiency in these things will enable him to use his initiative later on to produce his own models, he will put up with the teacher's envelope.

The point is, then, that the child can get little pleasure out of making things to the teacher's orders, unless he is frequently able to make things to his own wish as a result. And we sometimes forget that fact in our desire to produce *something*.

There should be *some* practice-type lessons, then, in the Primary School. But there should also be many others, and in them the question arises: What sort of things will the child want to make, and how are you going to help him?

The ideal situation should be: let him make anything he feels like making; and there are teachers who approach very close to that ideal. But it takes time to reach such a position, and many will want to know the first steps on the road.

Well, there are two big snags: the limitation of materials, and the organisation of the class. Let's see what we can do about them.

THE EQUIPMENT.—Few classrooms have more than the usual scissors and paste. Why? Some teachers will blame requisition limitations, but a surprising number will also say that young children can't be trusted with such things as chisels and saws and screwdrivers. They will also add that they couldn't make much use of them in any case.

I believe none of these arguments is valid. If a child is trusted with a pair of scissors, can't he poke out his eye just as effectively as he could with a screwdriver or bodkin? And why deprive him of a chisel when every boy has a lethal penknife in his pocket? The alleged dangers just don't appear in practice if the normal precautions are taken.

The other point that juniors can't use these tools properly doesn't hold in fact, either. I've seen eight-year-olds (including girls) doing most accurate work with fretsaws, and children of eight and nine using sharp bodkins to make the holes in wooden basket bases they have sawn out themselves.

In brief, then, I'd urge that you start a collection of tools, either from official sources, school funds, or brought by the children; tools such as these:

Screwdriver, chisels, small plane, small saws, sawing boards, fretsaws, hand-drill with bits, leather punch, bradawls, pliers, set-square, small vice, hammers (with nails, tacks, panel pins), paint brushes.

It is probable that a desk or table will have to be used for the vice. Sawing and planing can easily be done on the desks. A stop must be fixed on desks without ledges. An easily accessible rack can be constructed to avoid fuss in getting out the tools.

The ideas above suggest at once the use of various media, especially wood, which are not easily obtainable. How are they to be obtained?

There are two answers, apart from requisitions. The first is: the children will bring them. Wood in particular will be brought in bits and pieces, from clean sheets of three-ply to old orange boxes. A tea chest is a frequent windfall. All this can be used for *something*, from seed labels to fraction trays, road signs to lake villages. Girls will bring cloth and wool for their needlework, and all children will bring such things as plastic wire and bits of leather, cotton reels and screws, tins of enamel and lengths of string, pieces of glass, and old inner tubes.

The other answer, where home help fails, must lie with school funds. Every school should have a fund for school use. And it should be *used*.

THE ORGANISATION.—Suppose that you have the equipment I have mentioned. Now, you say, what's going to *happen*.

Well, start with a discussion. What would the class like to make, knowing the material available?

There will be suggestions, slowly at first until they're used to the idea. But one trend will emerge, and should be encouraged. *They'll want to make things connected with their other class work*. Models of native villages, covers for exercise books, cut-outs of historical figures, charts for team points, displays for the class shop, fraction-cards, little boxes for the nature table, and so on. With duller children you will have to put in tactful ideas yourself, and of course if there's something the classroom particularly needs, you'll have mentioned that!

The first move should be into *groups*, and their smoothness depends on whether the class is used to working in groups or not. Having decided on four or five of the ideas that arose from the discussion, the children can be divided up under leaders to make the various models. Some groups will of course consist of children making separate individual models of the same thing (e.g. book-covers); others will be working on a communal model (e.g. a Saxon village). It is essential that each group should have a leader responsible for the apparatus needed, so that succeeding lessons can start with a swing.

Now the point comes up: what is going to happen during these lessons? The first rule is this: each child (or group) has a problem to tackle, a job to do. Before starting on it, he must plan *how* he will solve the problem, and show you his plans. A sketch on rough paper, or an oral explanation, will do. You are a sort of rubber-stamping bureaucrat at your desk. The groups at work on a communal model ensure that you don't have a large queue, as their leaders represent them. Most children can be allowed to start in a very short time, giving you more time with the less adaptable ones. And, once under way, it's astonishing how engrossed a child becomes in something he *wanted* to make.

You will soon be free to visit groups to see how they are getting on, talk with a whole group over some aspect of their work, or show them how to carry out some operation. Now and again a child from elsewhere will come to you, but the room is really a busy workshop. There's a noise, agreed, but it's a work-noise, not a mischief-noise, and it gives you a pleasant feeling to see all this initiative and satisfaction in the room.

In fact, of course, it isn't yet fully individual. But you've taken a good step in the right direction, even if the class *isn't* turning out beautiful models to pattern! You have at least gone half-way from being a pure dictator (as with the envelope) to allowing each child to make what he wants, as a member of a group. This practice can be extended slowly, so that this is the sort of thing that can eventually happen:

Johnny says: "I'd like to make an engine for my little brother."

"All right; sketch it out and think what you will need."

Johnny does so, perhaps consulting his next-door neighbour, who is maybe making a Plasticine farmyard at the time. Knowing the practice, Johnny will bring bits of wood from home and a saw if you haven't one, before presenting his plans. Don't be too particular over the plans, but let him start.

The snag may be that Johnny can't saw. Right, hand him over to Jimmy, who can. Note the points.

(i) The idea comes from the child.
(ii) The child plans the job.
(iii) The child sees that he gets hold of the apparatus.
(iv) Other children help him where necessary.

I repeat, it *does* happen, and multiplied by fifty at that. The secret lies in first setting up the right attitude—initiative instead of dictatorship—from which arise mutual help and co-operation among the children. You can cope with large numbers that way.

Finally, then, a summary of the sort of 'handwork'—*real* creative work—that can go on under these conditions.

I can clarify things more if I list the actual activities of a mixed class of 49 nine-year-olds that I had at one time.

Three girls and five boys were making parts for a model of a Norman manor (from a chart). Eleven boys were making individual baskets (some for class use, some to take home). Five girls were knitting and three sewing (some clothes for puppets, some for dolls). Three boys were using Plasticine for a model farmyard. Four girls were tidying up the nature table, making labels, etc. Five others and two boys were making covers and labels for worn library books. Three boys were 'trying out' toys with bits of wood. And the remaining five girls were making up poems!

Two final points. First, I've said nothing about exact measurements and detailed plans. There are plenty of books with these in, but in any case they don't matter at this stage. Secondly, and as a result of the first point, don't expect the perfection of the mass-produced envelope in this type of work. You'll often get crude results—but the models are *real*, and their makers are proud of them.

I'll expand my attitude on 'creation' in the later chapter on Handwork.

CHAPTER VI

A CLASS AT WORK

LET's take a tour of a classroom now, and see my 'three-point balance' of work in actual operation. It's a nine-year-old class of bright children in a three-stream school.

The desks, luckily, are of the flat-topped type, with rubber-shod chairs. Their arrangement in the room varies according to the work going on. If it's a class lesson the children move to face the teacher, though not necessarily in rows. In group lessons they put the tables together—three or four if they have a big piece of work to lay out—and move chairs out of the way if they wish to stand. Thus there's more room to move about. If a lot of floor-space is needed (e.g. for dramatisation) desks are moved to the sides, and even stacked.

The usual confusion of furniture-moving soon disappears in a class that gets used to doing it as matter of course. It becomes no more noticeable than the giving out of books.

(Old-fashioned desks present a bigger problem, but not an insurmountable one. If desks face each other in pairs round the perimeter of the room, this provides for class lessons, group work, and extra floor-space with very little desk-moving.)

One corner of the room contains boxes with odds and ends of materials in them. Above is a strip of wood with nails, from which hang a variety of tools.

Bookshelves at the front contain a wide selection of books, both fiction and reference.

Cupboards, walls, floor, windows, etc.—well, look back at my remarks in earlier chapters. There is, of course, a Nature Table.

Teacher's Time

I'll introduce you to the work gradually, so let's see first an ordinary class lesson.

It appears to be a Geography lesson, for the blackboard and walls contain pictures of Eskimos, igloos, polar bears, and so on.

The theme, however, seems to be 'Building', for if we take a quick glance round we see that the class and classroom fairly exude 'Buildings'.

Yes, that's the current Centre of Interest, occupying much of the 'Children's Time' in various activities, and spreading into ordinary lessons as well, and even into some of the 'tool subject' time.

This particular lesson is part of the teacher's contribution. She is giving the class a lesson on Eskimo homes, but finds it difficult not to mention the people themselves and their way of life! Each child is adding something to his 'Buildings' folio or notebook by sketches and writing.

How Did It Start?

After the class had become used to 'Children's Time' on Friday afternoons the teacher took them out in the street one sunny day, and they had a look at it. (Maybe there's a street or road outside *your* school!)

They examined the different sorts of houses and shops, a garage, a police station, a factory in the distance. They began to *notice* the buildings they had *seen* every day for years—

the bricks, windows, roofs, chimneys, steps, gardens, people going in and out.

They returned and looked at the school building itself. They went back into the classroom curious and excited (and a little noisy!). They talked about buildings all afternoon. What other sorts did they know? What sort were there out in the country? ("Come on, Jim, you've been to a farm!") Were buildings always like this? Were people in other countries used to the same sort of buildings? If not, why not?

This was a most thrilling business! They had been in and out of buildings for years, but had never realised how interesting they were.

. . . . .

Well, that's how it started. And before we look at the 'activity' side, with its organisation difficulties, let's keep at first on familiar ground, and see what other *lessons* the teacher is taking, based on the Centre of Interest. All teachers take lessons, even if few stop to ask: "Why this particular one?" This teacher also is taking lessons, as we have already seen, but she has good reasons for them: the children are interested in 'Buildings', and a number of lessons are *about* 'Buildings'. She has evolved a rough scheme, and even used traditional subject-labels, for the Head is rather particular about that.

ARITHMETIC.—Various measurements for simple plans and models of buildings. Discussions on spare-time house-counting. Simple area, starting from the surface of bricks and window-panes. Most houses have clocks: who can tell the time . . .? (There is much more basic Arithmetic done, of course, in more formal lessons.)

HANDWORK.—A communal model of the street outside, much simplified. Many group and individual models of items of furniture, houses in other lands, and of other periods. Work with wood, card, paper, and Plasticine.

ART.—Imaginative compositions connected with activities at home, or other people and their homes. Decorating inner walls, designing curtains, etc., for some of the models.

HISTORY.—The development of building from very early days. What sort of people lived in homes of different periods?

GEOGRAPHY.—Homes in other lands, and their inhabitants. Simple plans of local streets.

NATURE STUDY.—Various plants, birds, animals noticed by the children in their gardens.

CIVICS.—A visit by a bricklayer's foreman, followed by some lessons on water supply, electricity, and in a small way the idea of 'public' utilities.

ENGLISH.—Written work connected with other subjects. A number of poems with a 'Home' theme. Speaking and dramatisation. Discussions and spellings as they occur.

. . . . .

We'll pause here, before visiting the less familiar activities of a Centre of Interest. So far, you must agree, we've seen nothing that couldn't be done by any teacher. *You* have lessons in Geography, History, Nature Study, and the rest. Are *your* lessons linked in any way, and if not, what do you think of a natural correlation such as the above?

You would obviously be able to add to the above scheme. It is essentially an individual matter, and in fact is often itself modified when some sudden class keenness shows itself in any particular direction.

But these were only the more formal schemes. Now let's visit the class in its more active times.

Children's Time

The first thing to remember is that 'Children's Time' *doesn't* occur all day, as violent opponents of 'new' methods would have you believe. It takes place, with this class, on *three occasions per week, an hour each.*

There's quite a different picture now from the lesson we saw before. Maybe we can't even see the teacher for a time, for there are groups and individuals scattered about. There's some noise, but certainly not a deafening amount, and *all* the children are busy. (But don't forget that you can't achieve this attitude at short notice: it must evolve gradually.)

One group appears to be working on a large model of the local streets and buildings. We can see that most of the material has been brought and improvised by the children, but though it may not be suitable for a show-piece, it's *theirs*. Another group is making a map of the area to correspond. They've even taken the trouble to discover who lives in each building or what its use is. A third group is completing a plan of the school building.

A number of individuals are working on their *Homes in other lands* or *Homes long ago* folios, colouring pictures or adding short notes with the aid of reference books. Others are reading appropriate books. A few are completing pieces of written work or imaginative paintings.

Now does that present a picture which seems far-fetched to *you*? Is there anything happening in this classroom which couldn't happen in *any* classroom, given several weeks to get children used to the idea?

Everything that is happening has arisen from the theme of 'Buildings', and has been inspired by the lessons taken by the teacher, or by the intense interest in general. Agreed, it's easy to describe such a situation, but not so easy to bring it to pass. The only answer to doubters is: "Try it and see." The fact remains that such 'Children's Times' *do* happen in many classes, though the teachers concerned often started with some trepidation ("Let them move about? Good gracious, what next!"). The secret is in the *interest*. It's the best disciplinarian there is.

Some Important Considerations

Looking around this classroom, then, let's remind ourselves of a number of things that are in evidence during these 'Children's Time' periods.

THE INFORMAL ARRANGEMENT OF DESKS, ETC.—I have mentioned this several times, and it is essential for the free movement and group work which take place in the 'activity' times.

THE REFERENCE LIBRARY.—There must be a number of books available in which information can be found. These can be collected from among sets in other classrooms, brought by children, requisitioned, or bought from school funds. A determined teacher will soon build up a library.

THE AVAILABILITY OF CUPBOARDS AND MATERIAL.—It is clear that children must be trusted to get themselves brushes, paste, colours, tools, card, paper, etc., rather more than is the normal custom. This may not be done satisfactorily at first, but a sense of responsibility soon begins to show—an attitude unknown in classes supplied always by official 'monitors'.

THE OBVIOUS 'OUTSIDE WORK' THAT GOES ON.—This class surely doesn't do this sort of thing only in the school. We can tell, from the type of activity we've seen, that the interest spreads into their own homes and the streets, to their reading and conversation outside school. This result in itself should commend the approach to all who are interested in the child as a real being, and not merely as a unit in a class.

THE PLEASANT CLASS-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP.—The teacher here is a friend and a consultant, yet a leader. She has fanned the interest, and is now available to help it on its way. What a difference from the common 'class versus teacher' dogfight!

—But Don't Forget the Basic Subjects!

We've seen a class lesson, and the teacher's scheme of lessons around 'Building'. We've seen 'Children's Time' devoted to freer work on the theme. This is where the old, hackneyed questions are asked:

"Don't the children get fed up with 'Buildings'?" and, "How do they ever learn to read, write, and do Arithmetic?"

Recall then, please, my 'three-point balance'. The first point was that the Three R's, plus Speech, *must* be taught in Primary Schools. You may remember that there was some English and Arithmetic included in the teacher's 'Buildings' scheme. But she still takes *many purely teaching lessons* in those subjects. unconnected with the Centre of Interest.

This class 'does sums'. It learns tables and spellings. It has speech-training lessons, 'talking' practice, dramatisation, English exercises, compositions. It has tests and marks-lists. It is, in short, a normal class, and not the collection of hooligans portrayed by anti-activity arguers (who have rarely tried it themselves).

It will be useful, then, to look again at one of these children before we end our visit to this class. What do we see?

(i) We see a child who is *interested* in what he is doing; who doesn't regard the work as something imposed by the teacher.

(ii) We see a child who uses his own *initiative* much of the day; who learns the value of working out problems for himself.

(iii) We see a child who is becoming used to the idea of *finding things out*. He won't have a nurse when he leaves school; in this class he's already learning independence.

(iv) We see a child who naturally *co-operates* with others in many ways; surely a tremendous asset in later life.

(v) Yet we see a child who is learning thoroughly the tools he will need as an adult, at the same time as he is developing an attitude towards life which would be difficult to encourage by completely formal methods.

Can you see these things in each child in front of *you*? For they are the test of your teaching.

More Centres of Interest

I think you'd be interested in a few more suggestions for Centres of Interest which are always likely to attract the child in the Primary School. Many of these will arise from the children and can easily be encouraged by you. Or, if you like things to be cut and dried beforehand, you can introduce the interest yourself by means of a few casual remarks.

Though I shall give you a list in a moment, there is nothing particularly mysterious about its composition. Anybody could make out such a list. The point is that the child is interested in *everything around him*. *He* doesn't arbitrarily put things into artificial compartments, labelled 'Geography', 'History', 'Arithmetic', and so on, even if *we* do. The child's world is divided into *natural* subjects, which make the school time-table look very silly to him.

Here are some of his 'subjects':

ALONG THE STREET.—Buses, cars, telephone kiosks, wires, cables, shops (a great variety), policemen, trams, gardens, drains, sewers, churches, mains, postmen (etc.), houses, factories, dustmen.

ALONG COUNTRY ROADS.—Cattle and sheep, horses and carts, farmyards and fields, poultry, ditches, delivery vans, growing crops, wild animals.

IN THE HOME.—Clothes, food (each variety has a wide interest), furniture, books, wireless, fires, lights, pets, pictures.

OTHER INTERESTS (dependent on the district).—Cinemas, railways, airfields, fairs, the moors and mountains, rivers and streams, docks, markets, the seashore, woods.

Shops

Let's take 'shops' as a final example of the type of interest which is easily encouraged in any Primary School class, It has an advantage over most of the others because of its strong arithmetical bias. Look at the work that can arise from the theme:

ARITHMETIC.—Four rules of *number* (quantities, dozens, score, gross). Four rules of *money* (change, bills, ordering quantities—practical and written). *Length* (ribbon, material, and in Handwork). *Weights* (with scales and written). *Capacity* (milk, paraffin, vinegar, etc.). Discount, reduction, wages.

ENGLISH.—*Letters*, personal, business, application for jobs. *Descriptive accounts* of shop-life, delivery-rounds, transport, where goods came from, what happens to them. *Abbreviations, bill-writing*. Incidental *grammar*, *spelling*, *handwriting* (it has a *purpose* now!). *Dramatisation*. *Speech*.

GEOGRAPHY.—(Just an example.) Where did the cocoa come from? Who lives there, and how does the cocoa get here? (There's the whole world in a shop!)

HISTORY.—Start from the first systems of barter, and shop through the ages, not forgetting the times in which the shoppers lived.

ART.—Decorative work in the class shop. Compositions about the shop and connected activities.

CRAFT.—The *construction-work*—shelves, compartments, stands, displays, manufacture and repair of packet-goods (in addition to the real ones collected). Account-books, baskets (if you have the cane), clay fruit, toys. Woven, knitted, and sewn work from the girls.

Both points two and three of my three-point balance are covered by the above schemes: there are lots of quite normal class lessons, though for once they are correlated; and if you look through the list again you'll see ample opportunity for freer activities—'finding out', making things, working in groups and as individuals in 'Children's Time'.

But—forgive the repetition—you will still remember Point 1—the teaching and practice of the basic subjects, which are also *used* in the above scheme.

. . . . .

Well, with the aid of the list of 'interests' above, the 'shops' scheme, and others mapped out in previous chapters, I hope you've got an idea of my general plea for a change of approach to the Primary School child. Every teacher can do *something* to make learning more active and natural, however rigid his time-table and syllabus may appear.

Maybe you already do this sort of thing. I hope so. But maybe you've also had food for at least a few thoughts during the chapters so far.

I'm adding here a flexible—and perhaps provocative!—time-table, which gives the teacher and the children much more freedom than do many time-tables still in existence; yet it ensures a *balance* in the teaching. Perhaps the time-table, too, may be of some use to you.

The next section of the book will deal with the vital 'basic subject' teaching, but I won't let these opening chapters fade from your memory!

The suggested time-table on page 56 is for a 9-year-old class (but easily modified for other ages). Geography, History, and Nature Study, if desired, can replace the Centre of Interest periods.

It is impossible to 'analyse' this time-table (if you like working in minutes), but you will see that the usual proportion of 'subjects' is in fact here, if you wish to insist on it.

A SUGGESTED 'BALANCED' TIME-TABLE

	9	9.30	9.45	10.15	10.45	11	12	1.30	2.30	2.40	3.40 4
M	ASSEMBLY AND RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE	Local affairs, Road Safety, good manners, behaviour in public, the day's work, talks by children, National Savings, hygiene, speech training, etc.	Children's Time. Centre of Interest —discussion and group work		RECREATION	Basic Subjects (Arithmetic, Speech, Reading, and/or Written work)	LUNCH	Art or Crafts (Class, group, and/or individual work)	RECREATION	Games	PRAYERS OR SECULAR ASSEMBLY
Tu			P.T.	Eng.		Basic Subjects (as Monday)		Children's Time. Centre of Interest ACTIVITIES		English and Music	
W			P.T.	Eng.		Basic Subjects (Spelling, Tables, and/or Handwriting)		Art or Crafts (Class work)		English (Drama, Oral work, Literature, etc.)	
Th			P.T.	Music		Basic Subjects (as Monday)		Centre of Interest LESSONS		Art or Crafts (Class, group and/or individual work)	
F			P.T.	Music		Basic Subjects (as Monday, but more practical and applied)		CHILDREN'S TIME (Hobbies, collections, games, models, pictures, reading, dramatisation, writing, etc.)			

PART TWO

THE BASIC SUBJECTS

CHAPTER VII

HELPING CHILDREN TO SPEAK

THIS book may appear to you to have made a peculiar start. In the first part it seemed to pass lightly over time-tables, the Three R's, syllabuses, and all the nice comfortable paraphernalia with which our Primary Schools have grown up, and without which teaching may seem an impossible business.

But did it? It spoke of the classroom, of the child doing and making things, of interest and activity, and of many things—'hints and tips', if you like—helping towards a pleasant atmosphere of learning; but it also stressed again and again the need for *balance* in your teaching, and included in that balance was a definite proportion of time to be devoted to teaching and practice in basic subjects.

Remember?

The present section, then, will be devoted to this aspect of your relationship with the child. You may feel that this is more concrete ground, but I'd remind you that it is only *part* of your work, and I'd add that I will be suggesting even here much more active learning than tradition has given us.

I might even shock you from the start, for I'm suggesting right away that most of us neglect the most important of all the basic subjects—*speech*. It is the *only* subject which we can confidently say that the child will need. He may need others, but he will certainly *speak*. Yet how often is he helped to speak well? Do *you* teach speech?

Perhaps you have no special time set apart for 'Speech Training'—for some reason few of our time-tables contain such periods—but do you, as a result, neglect the teaching of speech? Or do you realise that speaking comes into all lessons, and can be taught unobtrusively all the time?

I think there is a danger, however, in leaving speech to be learnt incidentally. There will be an obvious tendency to forget all about it in concentration on the various other subjects. Put it on the child's time-table, then. And for preference have a short period *every day* rather than a long painful period once a week.

As in a number of things, *ten minutes a day* is short enough and frequent enough to maintain interest and variety and avoid boredom. I shall mention this 'ten-minutes-a-day' idea several times in relation to basic subject work. I believe it has great value in various types of consolidation and revision practice.

Before discussing types of Speech Training, I must touch on the problem of dialect. I'll say at once that I'm not going to condemn it or suggest its gradual elimination. The child will be a poor mass-produced specimen if he grows up with only Standard English speech at his command. But he will also be severely handicapped if he can speak only, for example, in broad Lancashire.

How are you to help him then? The answer seems to lie in *bilingualism*: give the child a pleasant, reasonably standardised form of speech for use when needed, but do not condemn his local dialect in so doing. In any case, to eradicate dialect completely would require so much of the time-table that other learning would have to suffer.

You may not agree with me here. You may feel mine is a hypocritical attitude. 'Talk how you like out of school, so long as you talk like *this* to me!' But think a moment. Isn't that what will happen in any case, unless you make the most strenuous efforts? Isn't that, in fact, what many of us do ourselves? Don't we have one speech for one occasion and another for use in other circumstances? We would be foolish to delude ourselves that many of our children are going to speak as well in the street as they do in school.

Give them the ability to speak well when necessary, then. And this means a deliberate plan of training, used, as I have said, every day.

What sort of a plan? What aspects of Speech can be tackled? I suggest there are three main ones:

1. CORRECTNESS OF SOUND.—Help for the child in pronouncing clearly, and with a fair standard of accuracy, the various consonants and vowel-sounds.

2. VARIETY OF 'TUNE'.—By this I mean help in overcoming monotony in speaking; this can be achieved by pointing out how pitch, speed, strength, emphasis, and manner can be varied to produce more interesting speech.

3. FLUENCY AND CONFIDENCE.—There must be practice in *using* the accuracy and variety acquired. In other words, your children must be *allowed* and *encouraged* to speak.

AIM 1: CORRECTNESS OF SOUND

If you set out to help the child to pronounce with accuracy whatever he says, you'll have to think about the oft-debated question: 'What *is* Standard English?' Is it B.B.C. English, the King's English, or what? Perhaps Professor Lloyd James defined it best:

> *. . . speech . . . that can be heard from Land's End to John o' Groats without causing discontent.*

With that idea in mind, your natural approach to this aspect of Speech will be to decide what particular sounds are found in our language. You will then be able to practise your class in these sounds, and to discover which sounds are pronounced with least accuracy in your district.

On page 60, then, are the main sounds in the English language, incorporated in simple words.

This list may seem to reduce sound-accuracy training to a very simple and straightforward level. But you will have the problem of making the practice interesting. Children are not going to enjoy repeating the words over and over again. You therefore need a good deal of imagination to maintain the interest.

In keeping with the general attitude of this book I'd suggest that you throw a lot of initiative on the children. Put it to them that there are certain sounds which should be spoken in a certain way. Some of these sounds are harder than others. Describe to them the mouth-shapes, and tongue and teeth

VOWEL-SOUNDS (as in)

ale
ah
all
at
air
eel
end
err
pie
it
ode
boot
on
up
bull
oil
owl
ear
door
tour

CONSONANT-SOUNDS (as in)

pipe
babe
tot
dad
kick
gag
fife
Vow
sauce
Zone
THigh
THy
church
Joke
SHare
meaSure
mum
lull
nan
Run
waR
Hat
Wise
WHistle
soNG
Yoke

positions which help with the sounds. Encourage them to use mirrors in practising, and ask them to make up little sentences and rhymes for the practice of each sound.

You will get a surprising collection of examples. A class of forty children will soon produce rhymes or sentences like these:

The brown cow watched the plough.
How are the flowers down in the town?

(These were suggested for practising the misspoken 'ow' sound in Southern English.)

'Too-whit, too-whoo', hooted the owl.
'Who are you?' said little Boy Blue.

(For practising the misspoken 'oo' sound in the Black Country.)

By initiative methods like these, and by use of rhymes and jingles found in all Speech Training text-books, you can keep your children conscious of sound-accuracy. Deal with three or four sounds every week in one or two of the 'ten-minutes-a-day' periods, with extra attention to local troubles. In this way your class, without being bored by long weary lessons, will become conscious in a pleasant way of their own speech-accuracy or non-accuracy. And this very consciousness is a tremendous help in the job you're trying to do.

AIM 2: 'VARIETY OF TUNE'

Next to slovenly and incorrect sounds, *monotony* is the second noticeable fault in children's speech. They speak most naturally among themselves in the Infant School, but gradually they evolve a 'one-level, one-speed' way of talking as they move through the Primary School, though it is more obvious in the classroom than outside.

This queer, irritating manner probably develops from two main sources:

(i) The mechanical difficulties of Reading. The child (particularly if he has to read to the class) is much too busy making the right noises from his reading-book to bother about varying his speech as a whole, and this habit gradually spreads to ordinary speech.

(ii) The unnatural ways of speaking forced on many Primary School children: that strange period called 'Oral Composition'; reading plays from books instead of impromptu dramatisation; children forced to speak to the class in 'complete sentences'; these and similar artificial lessons lead to a parrot-like monotony. Each of the three methods instanced has a worthy enough aim, but I believe that each does more harm than good at the Primary age.

Whether you agree with my two causes or not, you will agree that the majority of children do show this monotony in much of their classroom speech. What can be done to help them? Our first aim was correctness of sound: this is our second.

The opposite of monotony is variety; and variety in speech is pleasing to hear. Its presence or absence seems to me to depend on five things: pitch, speed, strength, emphasis, and manner.

Variety of Pitch

Lack of this is the most obvious cause of monotony. Do your children restrict their speech to one 'note'? Or do they go 'up and down' as they speak? Ask them to draw the 'tune' of some common expressions, such as these:

'*Good gracious!*' '*Where are you?*' '*Why do you do this?*'

They'll delight in this 'tune-drawing', and you'll hear them speaking to each other, with exaggeration at first, but with increasing pitch-variety. The tune-drawing can be another of the varied little activities in your 'ten-minutes-a-day' of Speech Training. Gradually each child will become conscious of this aspect of pleasant speaking.

Variety of Speed

This is not so important as pitch-variety, but is still a part of interesting speech. Look at these two sentences:

Slowly the old horse plodded along.
He dashed down the road like the wind.

Ask a child *how* to say these two sentences, and he will immediately see the differences in speed. He probably varies his own speech-speed when at play. Hear him say: "Quick, quick; throw it", and then, "Poor little pussy". But does he carry that speed-variety into the classroom?

Again, then, the occasional discussion, *with examples provided by the children*, will help them to think of this aspect of variety, and you will see the more subtle applications coming into their speech, too.

Variety of Strength

By this I mean changes in the *volume* of the sounds being spoken. You'll hear these changes in the playground; compare the shout to a pal at the other end with the whispered words of a 'gang' plotting. Those are of course extremes, but in all speech there are words or phrases which call for a rise or fall in volume when they are spoken. Your children will give you examples of these: the shout, the 'ordinary' sound, the whisper. They will write down phrases and sentences, or suggest them to each other in groups. And they will eagerly point out the loud, medium, or soft parts in a reading book. Do you let them do these things?

Variety of Emphasis

This is connected with, but not quite the same as the previous point. It concerns the stress or non-stress used by good speakers to make their speech telling and effective. Perhaps teachers in Primary Schools are more efficient users of emphasis than any other human beings except professional orators. But do children emulate us? I think not, for the command: "Put more expression into it!" is distressingly common.

I should say that this use of emphasis is the most difficult of my 'varieties' to bring home to a child. He just doesn't know what we *mean* by 'expression'. Well, what *do* we mean? Perhaps we can help him best to see what we're getting at by giving him one of the classic sentences to play with:

Did you lend him two shillings?

Say this to a class six times, with the emphasis on a different word each time, and ask them what you mean. They'll soon tell you the different meanings of these six different ways of saying the same words! With a few more examples from you, they will start providing, as before, instances of their own. That will give you more opportunity for group-work.

Variety of Manner

We say some things scornfully, others sadly, fiercely, incredulously, wonderingly, and so on. The sentence quoted above ('Did you lend him two shillings?') can be spoken scornfully or incredulously, thus adding two more meanings to the six already suggested. Try this sort of thing with your class. Ask them, for instance, how they would say the following:

Don't you dare touch me!
I just don't believe it.
The poor little sparrow was dead.
Doesn't he think he's clever?
I've never seen such a beautiful sight.

You won't need many more such sentences. The class will provide them!

Choral Speech

The 'Recitation' of poems is perhaps the most common revelation of monotony in children, so before leaving Aim 2 I would like to say something about this. The monotony here is not so much of the 'one-note' variety, but is usually an irritating sing-song.

Various methods have been tried to overcome this habit, but perhaps choral verse speaking is one of the most successful. Its purpose is to interest children in the beauty and rhythm of poetry, by letting them *live* a poem as they say it together. The emphasis is on rhythm and meaning, rather than the parrot-learning which is still very common.

Poems chosen should be full of movement, though not necessarily always vigorous movement. They should bring vivid pictures to the children. Westwood's *Mill-Song*, the traditional *Twelve Days of Christmas*, Hardy's *Marching Song*, Tennyson's *The Owl* and *The Brook*—such poems delight children.

You can divide the class into sections to say (*and* act) a line or stanza in turn. Many poems lend themselves to such chorus-work, so that although different children have different sections to say, the whole class is contributing.

'Sing-song' disappears if the poems are good ones. Real speech and meaning take its place. If you are interested in this useful method, read Mona Swann's *An Approach to Choral Speech.*

AIM 3: FLUENCY AND CONFIDENCE

Our first two aims have been concerned more with the *technique* of speech—correctness of sound and variety of

Children are nosey-parkers, but they can *write* what they find out.

Children like creating things. Here a group is busy with wool, at all stages from the sheep to the woven article.

'tune'. I'm turning now to a rather different aspect, but still one which should be part of the child's learning: the ease and sureness with which he speaks.

How can you help him to *use* the correctness and variety which he is learning, and to use them freely and happily? You have a number of obstacles in your way: self-consciousness, perhaps; certainly the tradition of 'keeping quiet'.

Obviously, whatever methods you use, their first aim must be to *encourage* the child to talk. I say 'obviously', for with our aim in mind, such encouragement *is* the obvious thing to do. But how many children are in fact allowed to speak very often in the classroom? More frequently speech training is neutralised by an almost total ban on speaking except when spoken to!

I've emphasised in previous chapters the unnaturalness of this repressive attitude to Primary children, and fluency of speech is only one of the damaged abilities in a rigidly controlled class. I'll develop here, then, some of the activities which, if allowed and encouraged, will develop this fluency along with many other attributes.

'*Talking in Class*'

Although progressive schools allow much more freedom to children these days, a good teacher can always obtain perfect quiet and full attention whenever necessary. Such a teacher knows, too, that 'talking in class', far from being a sin, is a positive asset on occasions. Do *you* allow children to discuss work with each other, and to talk together in groups?

This discussion among children can and should take place in *all* practical lessons—Craft, Art, and practical activities during other lessons. Children should be able to talk freely to each other during any form of group activity, provided the discussion is reasonably relevant. (Though why shouldn't it be irrelevant sometimes? The ability to *converse* is no mean achievement!)

Talking to a neighbour during 'sums' is traditionally a crime. Why? I'm certain that many children are *encouraged* to cheat by the jumpy teacher who spends half the lesson telling them not to! Instead of adopting this negative and nerve-rending attitude, why don't we concentrate more on the positive, and encourage them to *co-operate* in Arithmetic—to help each other in the finding of the answers? There's a world of difference between copying and co-operation. Co-operation, in a class which has been accustomed to copy whenever possible, is not easily achieved, but if you are patient, allow the children to discuss work with each other freely, and move among them as they do it, you will help speech-fluency as well as honesty and good-neighbourliness.

Try it, but don't expect success in a week. The same attitude should be adopted in many lessons involving written work, though not necessarily in all such lessons. Children, innately decent, will soon respond when a non-talking piece of work is suggested.

Talking To the Class

From early days most children take part in some form of work which involves their standing in front of the class and speaking. This should be excellent training in fluency and confidence, but unfortunately it is often ruined by a nagging insistence on correctness of sound and grammar. A child who is bursting to have his say may be gradually transformed into a nervous, hesitant person, scared to open his mouth.

How do *your* children fare in this? I agree that it is worrying to hear the ungrammatical and uncouth way in which some children will speak if not corrected, but if the two parallel aims of speech training are being applied by you, the roughness will soon begin to disappear of its own accord. Your problem is to find a balance between correction which discourages, and a confident flow of speech which may contain glaring errors. Normally, friendly attention drawn to the worst errors, preferably when the child has finished, is sufficient.

What can children talk about? Literally, *anything*. They can tell the class a story, describe a picture they have seen, or what happened at their birthday party, or Uncle Bill's goldfish-pond and so on. This can occur in almost any lesson, for often children are eager to contribute if they haven't been too thoroughly muzzled in previous classes. Here again, of course, is something for your 'ten-minutes-a-day' of speech training, but children should be talking to the class, however briefly, on many other occasions in every day.

Talking to You

Most children approach a teacher eagerly, anxious to talk. Large classes make listening to them all an impossibility, but I beg you to listen to as many as possible, to try to hear everybody as soon as you can, and to encourage particularly the hesitant ones to talk to you.

They are full of exciting experiences, keen to tell them to you. Quite apart from the confidence-practice, allowing them to tell you their interests helps the teacher-child relationship, and gives you a much more intimate idea of your children and their thoughts. A grumpy, unapproachable teacher is never a happy teacher, however difficult the time-factor may be.

Making Speeches

Speech-making may seem rather beyond a Primary School child, but if you are prepared to be patient with the self-conscious and the silly, many confident 'orators' will develop, and the class can learn much in the development.

Speech-making can arise in debates ("Arithmetic should not be done in schools"; "Children should be in bed by eight o'clock," etc.), in mock elections to a 'Class Council', or in 'lecturettes' on special interests.

The Class Council in particular is a useful activity in many ways. It can be a simple beginning to the idea of Civics, for it can make small rules of conduct, appoint monitors, etc., and can be linked with visits from public servants in connection with other 'subjects'. It is surprising how enthusiastic children will get at 'election-time', preparing posters and the most persuasive speeches.

Listening and Lesson-Sharing

Don't underrate the value of *listening* in encouraging this fluency and confidence. Listening to other children, to broadcasts, to classroom visitors, and particularly to *you*, both when you talk to them and when you read a story—all these set subtle examples to be followed by the children.

Lesson-sharing, too, is essential to produce children who are not afraid to speak. By lesson-sharing I mean allowing children to take the maximum part even in 'teaching' lessons. Do you regard 'teaching' as 'the imparting of knowledge by you', or do you consider it a process by which knowledge is 'drawn from' the children? Surely the latter these days, and this involves much question-and-answer and many naturally spoken contributions by the children. A teacher who merely 'lectures' is unlikely to have children who can talk confidently.

Dramatisation

Finally, in my suggestions for the third aspect of speech training, I must stress the value of dramatisation. I do *not* mean the reading of plays from books, nor do I mean merely a particular lesson labelled 'Drama'. I mean the frequent miming and acting of situations and stories, *whenever they occur*. This acting, at least until the final year, should be spontaneous and impromptu, the words and deeds supplied by the children, unrestricted by many instructions from you or a book.

Children will act quite happily a man asking a policeman the way in a fog, a girl who has lost her little brother, a boy going shopping, a woman getting on the wrong bus. You can think of dozens of such everyday occurrences, and put children into little groups to prepare them.

They will act many History and Scripture stories, as well as stories and poems from their ordinary reading-books. They will make up stories to act. The speaking side will need encouragement, and may be crude at first, but don't extinguish the spark altogether with too much interruption and criticism.

If—yes, if—children have done much impromptu dramatisation through the school, they may be ready to *write* plays or read them from books by the time they are ten, but it is foolish to expect this without a good training in spontaneity.

CHAPTER VIII

HELPING CHILDREN TO READ

I HOPE that I've convinced you in the previous chapter of the great importance of Speech. Perhaps that chapter gave you thought, but I won't have to waste any words convincing you of the importance of Reading. It is a subject which probably causes heartache to more teachers, and misery to more children than does any other. It looms up in time-tables of the old type more often than anything except Arithmetic. And after all the time and trouble we spend on it in schools, we open our papers regularly and find high military men bewailing the fact that recruits can't read!

Even allowing for the natural exaggeration of speech-makers, it is a fact that a few children do complete their school life without learning to read, and many more never reach a reading-level which one would expect them to reach. And all this is a tremendous handicap to them.

WHY BAD READING?

This unfortunate state of affairs reflects particularly on the Primary School. *Why* is the learning of Reading so difficult for so many children? *Why* do some children never really learn to read at all? And *why* is 'Reading' so often a distressing and disliked lesson in school?

I'd suggest six reasons:

1. *Forcing 'Reading' on Children at too early an age*

Many Infant Schools, possibly because of pressure from above, try to teach children to read long before they are *ready* to learn. This sets up a dislike of Reading.

It doesn't seem to be sufficiently known that children need a great deal of speaking, telling and hearing stories, discussing pictures, and such-like practice in the use of *words*, before they are psychologically ready to learn to read. The Infant School will do much of this preparation, but the Primary School will have to continue it in many cases. Some Primary teachers don't realise this; which leads on to my next point.

2. *Too much 'taking for granted' in school*

Many teachers presume that previous teachers have taught the beginnings of Reading. Thus many children become 'passengers'; nobody troubles to start at the beginning again with them, so that they make little further progress. In particular, Primary teachers tend to take it for granted that Reading has been 'taught' in the Infant School. This is a very dangerous presumption.

3. *Not enough objective measurement of Reading ability*

How do *you* measure your children's ability to read? By a casual hearing, or by standardised tests? The danger in the former is that you have no standards of comparison; you thus cannot tell how backward a child is, or whether he is making any progress.

4. *Unimaginative Reading lessons*

The soul-destroying practice of reading round the class from a Class Reader is still shockingly common. The brighter children are bored, the duller ones can't keep up. Nobody's happy except the half-dozen who can read at the same speed as the reader of the moment. And in any case, most of them have read the Class Reader surreptitiously months ago. So again, dislike of Reading grows.

5. *Unsuitable Reading-books*

I have mentioned the Class Readers, and their danger when read with a whole class. Many other books may also be unsuitable for a variety of reasons:

(*a*) They may deal with subjects which are uninteresting to the children. Children like different things at different ages, and it is well worth your while to conduct a Gallup Poll in your class before ordering new reading material.

(*b*) Their illustrations may be poor or non-existent. Lively, natural pictures, pleasantly coloured, are of great help in producing a keenness to read.

(*c*) The print may be too small or too complicated. With beginners, type should be large (18-point), and look like the script which the child himself uses. Lines should be short, and designed in phrases which help the child's eye-movements.

(*d*) Vocabulary control may be bad. Many people are unaware of the frustration caused by a page full of *new* words, however simple they may be. The use of simple words is *not* the only requirement for the writer of a child's reading-book. It is essential that each new page should be packed with familiar words, with a few new ones among them. The value of such a controlled vocabulary is tremendous. Have you checked your reading-books on this point?

6. *Insufficient knowledge (by the Primary Teacher) of initial teaching-methods*

I've already suggested that some children aren't really ready to *start* reading until they reach the Primary School. It is therefore necessary for Primary teachers to have some knowledge of the methods used in making a start. How many of them have that knowledge? Yet in the lower classes in particular the initial methods should be at the teacher's command.

HOW DO CHILDREN READ?

Well, perhaps I've annoyed you by some of my suggested reasons for reading difficulties and dislikes. The difficulties are there, all the same, and perhaps among the six suggestions above you've already found something which may give you ideas for helping your children.

Let's now turn to the interesting question of what process is followed by children when they *do* read. I've already said that all teachers ought to know something of these processes, and the teaching methods arising from them.

Children can make use of five aids in their efforts to read a word or group of words:

1. *The Pattern or Shape of the words on paper (SEEING the words)*

This is the most important aid to recognition. Words of different lengths or shapes in close proximity are more easily learnt than similar words close together. Thus a child can come to know *The black dog ran quickly* much more readily than *The fat cat sat on the mat*. The latter contains too many similar words. The former contains words which do not look like each other, and therefore do not confuse the struggling learner.

The above brief remarks no doubt contradict the principles of many early reading-books which you may know, but a little thought and experiment on your part should convince you of the truth of what I have had to put in very condensed form.

2. *SAYING the words*

The association of the sound with the visual pattern of words is most helpful to young children. Many of them continue with this aid very quietly for years. We ourselves perhaps 'say' in imagination what we read.

3. *HEARING the words*

In the early stages the teacher says the words for children to hear and associate with the visual patterns. Later they themselves hear the words as they say them, and another aid is brought to bear on the task of teaching Reading.

4. *Knowing the MEANING of the words*

This is the aspect which produces the interest and the incentive to read. Without the three former aids, meaning would be of no use, but there is little doubt that here is the 'spark' which helps the others to work together with maximum efficiency. It is possible that teachers concentrate far too much on patterns and saying and hearing in the early stages. How can words have interest if they are just useless noises?

5. *MAKING the words*

Children who find difficulty, even with the use of the previously described aids, can often be helped if they add the tracing or writing of words to their learning process. Very backward children have improved their Reading ability greatly by tracing words in the air, following them with a finger on the blackboard or in a book, and writing them. At the same time, they look at them, say them, hear them, and, of course, know their meaning.

TEACHING METHODS

I've suggested a number of possible reasons for Reading difficulties and dislikes, and outlined the basic processes by which children can come to translate the printed word into sensible sounds. Now let's see what methods of teaching have been evolved from these processes—*for all Primary School teachers, however well most of their children can read, should have knowledge of these teaching methods.*

1. The Alphabetic Method

This is the method by which most of us learnt to read. As its name suggests, it starts by teaching the children the alphabet —AY, BEE, CEE, etc. It then goes on to inform them, to their surprise, that CEE-AY-TEE says CAT, though it doesn't explain what strange magic transforms three sounds into a fourth and quite different sound.

It is perhaps easy to be cynical about this method, even if it did teach many to read, for it seems to lay all the emphasis on meaningless sounds, and keeps the stress on the sound rather than the meaning even when words are reached. As a method of teaching Reading it is largely discredited these days, but it can still be found in some schools.

2. The Phonic Method

The disadvantages of the Alphabetic Method led teachers to seek a better way, and the obvious move was to give new names to letters, indicating more accurately the *sounds* they make. Thus in the Phonic Method children still often learn the alphabet, but they say 'A' (short, as in 'cat'), 'B' (as in 'bat'), 'C' ('k' as in 'cat'), and so on, i.e. the *sound* rather than the *name* of the letter. When they begin to learn words they see far more easily that C-A-T when said quickly do in fact combine to say CAT.

The disadvantages of this method are not so great as those of the previous one, but an obvious drawback is the unfortunate truth that there are far more than twenty-six *sounds* in our language. A child learns to say 'A' as it is sounded in 'CAT', but when he sees it in CAKE, then again (in southern England) in GRASS, and in ALL, what is he to think? Yet we cannot teach a child full phonetics, for he has only the twenty-six letters in his reading.

(A minor disadvantage is that parents sabotage teaching efforts by continuing to refer to letters by their 'old' names—unintentionally, of course!)

The Phonic Method is perhaps used more than any other in Infant Schools now, at least to give children a start. As we shall see, many teachers pass from it to other methods.

3. The Kinaesthetic Method

I will make only brief mention of this. It has been developed mainly in America as an extra aid for children with special visual difficulties. It makes use of the *tracing* and *writing* of words as they are said, so that the shapes are more firmly fixed in the child's mind.

Though rarely found as a method on its own in this country, wise teachers make some use of its principles with bad cases of backwardness.

4. The 'Word-Whole' Method

This is, or is very similar to, the so-called 'Look and Say' Method. In it the child is not bothered at first with letters as such, but is introduced to *words* from the start. Words have meaning to him; they tell him something, and are thus much more interesting than dull letters.

Combined with pictures, and much intelligent speaking, the method can rouse bored children to a state of *wanting* to read. Later, of course, the component sounds will become known, but the initial emphasis is on meaning and interest rather than purely on sound.

5. The Sentence Method

This would seem to be a logical evolution from the previously described method. It suggests that even *words* can't give the child much information in themselves, but a simple sentence really tells him something and is worth learning. Thus in a classroom where this method is in use you will see strips of paper: *Here is a Desk*, *This is a Book*, *We made this Model*, *The Door is made of Wood*, etc.

Advocates of the Sentence Method point out that a good *spoken* vocabulary is necessary to the child first (I mentioned earlier the common lack of this). They also suggest that children starting with the Sentence Method will gradually, almost unconsciously, take in the other methods as they go along. They will soon become aware of the *words*, as new ones are gradually introduced, then of the *sounds* which make those words, and finally of the names given to the *letters* which record the sounds. (Note that in this way the Sentence Method does NOT ignore words and sounds.)

. . . . .

I've taken some little space to describe these teaching methods, but with good reason. Some of *your* children may have difficulty in reading, or an active dislike of it (unless you're very lucky). If you have one of the younger classes in the school, you'll have many children who cannot read. What do you do about these difficulties? Do you simply give out books and struggle away word by word with the bad or non-readers? Do you just hope it will come?

Far from 'coming' to such children, reading is more likely to 'go' if aimless methods are used. Frustration is one of the most dangerous components of the child mind. It has even been suggested that misbehaviour, hooliganism, and child delinquency may often be traced to a frustrated desire to read.

It is therefore necessary for you to think about these teaching methods which I have mentioned briefly above. You may well have to group some of your children and start at the very beginning with them. Which method will you use? I would suggest in such a case that you use the Sentence Method. Your children will be at an age when they might resent other methods, particularly those involving learning the alphabet; but sentences which tell them things, especially things of interest to them, will appeal. There are a number of suitable, brightly illustrated books now on publishers' lists, but you will also have to do quite a lot of work yourself, preparing reading-cards, putting up sentence-labels in the room, and of course organising Reading Lessons so that you can give more individual attention to those who need it.

I shall say something about this organisation shortly.

First, though, let's look at another important matter.

TESTING READING ABILITY

All teachers test Reading in some way, but whatever method is used, it is first necessary to decide *what* we are trying to test.

There are two distinct achievements at which the child aims:

1. He seeks ability to make the correct noises when he sees something in print; to translate into sound the marks on the paper. He then says with pride that he can *read*. (The question of *how* he says the words is, of course, important, but that is more a matter of speech than reading.)

2. He realises—at least in most cases—that making the right noises is not sufficient. It is a very boring business if the noises don't mean anything to him. So he aims at the second feat of *understanding* what he is reading.

Let us call these two interrelated aspects *recognition* and *comprehension*. They are the results of our reading teaching—the yardsticks by which we can measure the success or failure of whatever methods we use.

I would put a question to you at this stage: Do you tend to concentrate too much on the *recognition* ability of your class? That is, are you satisfied if a child can take a book and make the appropriate noises successfully? For I fear that this attitude is all too common. Reading is only too often 'saying the right sounds'.

Surely comprehension—knowing the meaning of what is read—is just as important right from the beginning, and grows more and more important as the child grows older. It is, of course, the *eventual* aim of reading, but should not be ignored in the early stages. It should therefore be tested as often as recognition is tested.

Testing Recognition

There are two main ways of testing whether a child can say the printed word. In one he is asked to read from a book, and the teacher gives him a mark, presumably derived from the ease with which he recognises the words, combined with the clarity and general manner of speaking, and related to the abilities of other members of the class.

The haphazardness of such a test led to much research, the aim being the concoction of a test which would show, without any mind-searching by the teacher, exactly how the child stood in comparison with normal children of his age, in regard to recognition of words.

Such tests have been devised by Ballard, Burt, Schonell, and others, and I would strongly suggest that you make use of one of the published tests. They are very simple to give, and will tell you a child's reading level for recognition, not just within your own class, but in carefully standardised comparison with the average for the child's age.

Briefly, they consist of a number of words or sentences which the child is asked to read. You note the number of words which he fails to recognise, compare the final score with the list supplied with the test, and you can then record his reading age. Thus you will know whether he is above or below average, and whether he has progressed as much as he should have done since the last test. (Needless to say, this paragraph does not purpose to give you full instructions for giving such tests; each test carries its own detailed instructions.)

Testing Comprehension

The obvious way to test comprehension is to ask the child questions about what he has read, though of course some idea can be gained from the manner in which he reads it.

Here again there are standardised objective tests available. One of Schonell's consists of a number of short paragraphs containing blank spaces. The child is given a choice of words with which to fill the blanks, but the point is that if he understands fully the rest of the paragraph he cannot help choosing the right words. The advantage of this test is that it can be given to the whole class at once in half an hour. From the results, and the table of norms, you can discover the reading ages for comprehension—and, incidentally, note how they compare with those for recognition. Often they are lower.

Other useful reading tests, though not so easy with large classes, can be found in A. F. Watts' book, *The Language and Mental Development of Children.*

Organising Reading Groups

Children who are beginning or well able to read need practice. I've already condemned reading round the class for this purpose. Its popularity is probably due to the difficulties of organising any controlled alternative method of ensuring that all the children are reading. Most teachers know about, and have probably tried, the group system. Often it is condemned without a fair trial. I would say without hesitation that, properly organised, it is by far the most satisfactory way of giving children interesting and concentrated reading practice.

Groups should not be haphazardly chosen. It is essential to test the class first by a standardised test, and make a list in order of ability. Take the two or three children at the bottom of the list (the worst readers) and put them in a group under the leadership of the *best* reader in the class. Then the next-to-the-worst readers under the next-to-the-best as a leader, and so on. The slower groups should be small, but no group should be larger than six, or it becomes cumbersome. Six children can form a composite intimate group in a pair of double-desks. The desks thus freed can act as 'buffer-states', or noise-insulators.

Obviously Class Readers are useless for group-work. The children need short but complete stories which they can enjoy, but which are not too difficult for them. They want something to *read*, not extracts to be laboured at over and over again. Scrap your Class Readers, then, as soon as convenient, and get instead a large collection of the Supplementary Readers offered by most publishers. Pick bright interesting ones of varying difficulty, in sets of six. You can buy thirty small sets for the price of a full class set of Readers. Keep the sets together with rubber bands, with a card protruding showing the name or number of the group reading that set at the moment.

Freedom of choice should be given, so long as you keep an eye on the slower readers, to make sure that they are capable of reading the book they choose. Sets not in use should be laid out during the lesson, for changing purposes as soon as books are finished by any group.

Procedure

A group-reading lesson can be one of those informal enjoyable lessons such as I described earlier—a complete contrast to the normal grind of reading. Under your control each group is partaking in the experience of an interesting story, reading in turn and discussing if they wish. Children are getting far more practice, and more natural practice than they would by any other method. You will be moving among them, but giving most help to the poorer readers.

There will be noise, true—quite a lot of it at first with a class not used to using initiative. But it will decrease as the interest grows.

Finally, let me answer a common objection—that bright children will suffer if put to lead slower ones. I just don't agree. I've often found that they even *improve* out of all proportion, possibly because they feel that they must set a standard. And in any case, a couple of group lessons a week form a very small proportion of a bright child's reading time.

. . . .

There is more that I could have said about reading—silent reading, reading for study, literature, and so on—but space does not permit, and this section is concerned more with the basic *ability* to read. You may remember, though, remarks I have made earlier: remarks about reference books and the class library, and the points about speech I made in the previous chapter. All these are closely connected with this ability labelled *reading*.

SOME QUESTIONS

I'll conclude with some summary questions to those of you who have any problem-readers in your class:

1. Do you get down to 'brass tacks' with them, and re-teach them Reading from the start?
2. If you find the method you use is not succeeding, do you change the method? (Research has shown that a change of method is often effective, since new interest is aroused.)
3. Are the books you use simple enough. and well illustrated, and do they have controlled vocabularies?
4. Do you do a great deal of speech-work, to build up the word-background for the children?
5. Do you test progress regularly with standardised tests?
6. Do you encourage the children by reading them stories, and showing them in many other ways how useful the art of Reading may be?

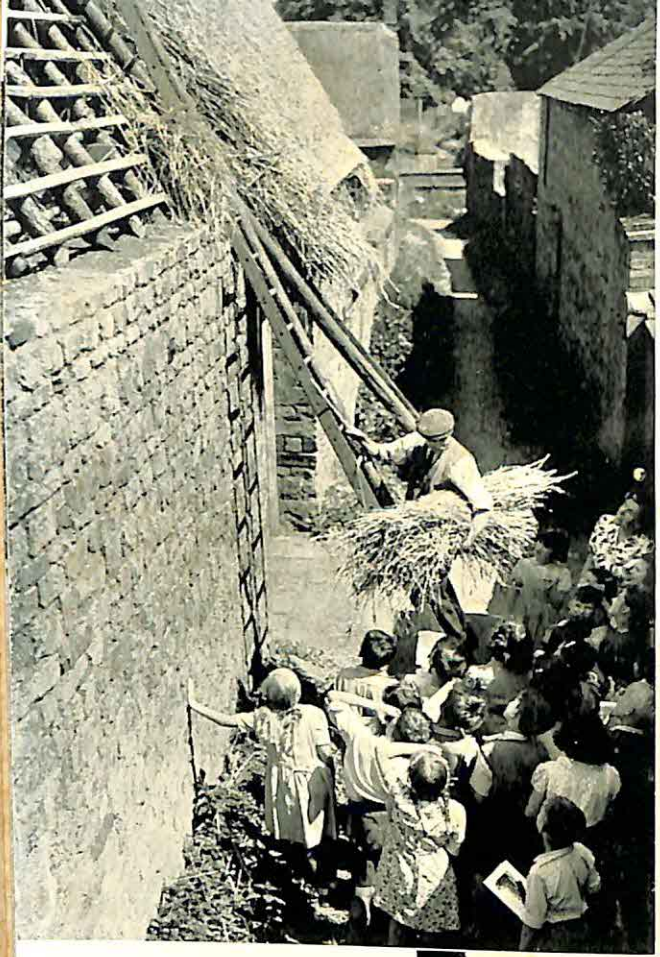
And a question for *all* teachers of children who *can* read:

Once your children can 'bark' properly, do you let them USE their ability, in reading for pleasure AND KNOWLEDGE?

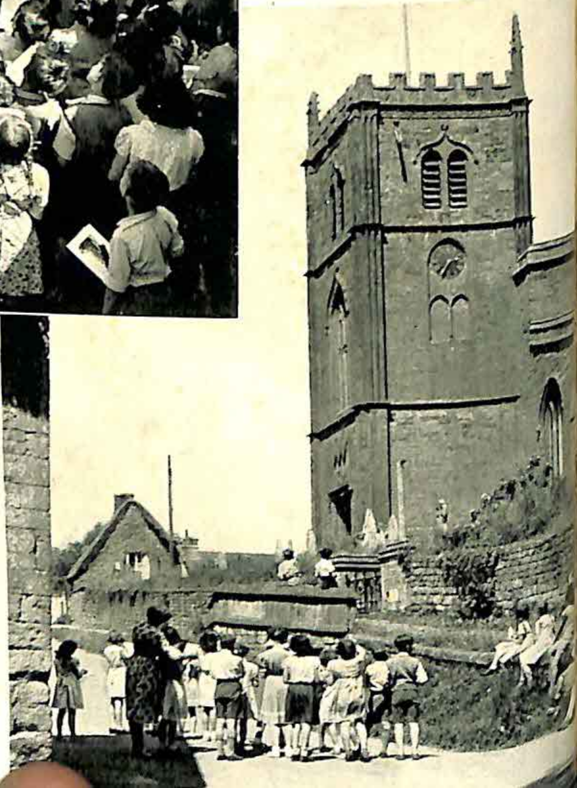
These children use their *Children's Time* to write letters to children in other parts of the country. There's Composition, Geography, self-confidence and social training in this activity.

(*Above*)
From early days children can work in groups in *real* Arithmetic.

(*Opposite*)
Use the desire to *collect* things—but let children use *books* to find out what the things are!



There are many subjects in *Buildings*.



There must be one of these near every school. History? Art? Handwork?—Yes, and *writing* and *reading* about it, too!

CHAPTER IX

HELPING CHILDREN TO WRITE

THE third basic ability which the child must possess in this modern world is the ability to express himself in writing. There was a time when it wasn't so necessary, but nowadays having to 'make one's mark' is quite a handicap.

This, then, is another basic subject which you will want to teach, and, if you are tackling it realistically, the child will want to learn.

I suggest, for a start, that the most important aid in arousing the child's desire to write is the *subject* about which he is writing. That statement may appear absurdly obvious, but before dismissing it as unnecessary, will you look back on the subjects about which *your* children have written recently? Can you honestly say that they interested the children? And further, that they interested *all* the children?

That last point, at least, may have made you wonder. Children are all so different from each other that they are rarely interested in the same things at the same time. But the wise teacher takes every opportunity of encouraging *individual* interests.

Written work gives just such an opportunity, and many Composition lessons should give the class *a free choice* of subject.

Think, then, about the subjects of written work. Think, too, whether the child might prefer to write about something which arose during other parts of the school time. History, Geography, Nature Study, and Religious Knowledge are full of topics worth writing about. If you have been active enough to adopt 'child subjects' such as 'Trains', 'Food', etc., the class will want to write about their discoveries. *Written expression is not necessarily restricted to what we call Composition.*

'SUBJECTS' TO WRITE ABOUT

Here, then, are some suggestions for topics which will encourage the child to *want* to write, both in and out of so-called Composition lessons:

1. *A Wall Newspaper*

A most stimulating activity, but don't be afraid to allow material copied from elsewhere—cartoons, drawings, cut-out pictures, etc. Encourage creation, but don't force it. Have an editor, a 'mounting' committee, and sheets of brown wrapping paper (yes, I *know* it will be creased . . .!). Children will write stories, plays, poems; report on activities; review books; insert real advertisements, etc. 'Copper-plate' advocates will turn in their graves at the thought of all this, but it *is* 'Composition', or I'm the man in the moon!

2. *A Class Magazine:* Prepared as above, but bound in book form. There's the problem of loose-binding for the children to solve here.

(Send the completed copies to a school somewhere else, and receive theirs in return).

3. *Diaries:* Children love keeping a *personal diary*, and can also contribute to a large *class diary*. *A Nature diary* is also useful. A diary is particularly useful, for it gives *daily practice*.

4. *Plays:* If your class has done the type of dramatisation mentioned earlier, they may be ready to *write* plays, but they should not make the attempt without the necessary spontaneous experience.

5. *Poems:* Have you ever tried encouraging children to compose poems? Results will have a curiously pleasant, if technically doubtful quality, but should not be restricted by insistence on metre and rhyme.

6. *Letter-writing:* This may be the only form of Composition indulged in by your children when they leave school. How often do you allow them to practise it? Let them write *real* letters. Parents will often give them envelopes and stamps. I've known surprised and pleased uncles return half-crown postal orders in reply to a well-written letter from a child, but perhaps that isn't a permissible incentive!

In poorer districts you may like to arrange with a friend teaching elsewhere for your classes to exchange letters *en masse*. All classes should at some time or other write letters to schools abroad, to firms for information, etc. There's Geography as well as delight in this.

7. *Reports of School or Local Activities:* There's always something happening in the class, school, or district. Encourage your children to observe and describe these concerts, plays, football matches, meets of the hounds, sports' days, or anything else that occurs. This may be for the newspaper, magazine, diary, or—if you must—the Composition book.

8. '*Notes*'*:* You know the old idea of note-copying in History, Geography and Nature Study? Surely it is more natural for children to *write their own accounts* of what they have discovered. More backward ones will need help and suggestions, but the habit will come in time and be enjoyed.

9. *Stories:* Children read and listen to stories. Let them write their own, too. Not necessarily in lessons, but at home or in spare time. 'Publish' some on the walls, and let children read them to the class.

10. *Other Subjects:* In connection with some of the above themes, or separately, let children:

(*a*) Describe personal experiences (parties, journeys, etc.);
(*b*) Describe hobbies;
(*c*) Describe 'What I found out' in group or individual assignments;
(*d*) Compose descriptions for the Nature table, wall displays, models, etc.;
(*e*) Write word-definitions in their personal dictionaries.

—And always allow children to *illustrate* their written expression.

. . . . .

All the above subjects look very pretty, you will be saying, but it's rather like asking a child to run before he can even hobble.

I agree that on the surface it may appear absurd to ask a child to write, say, a poem, before he can compose even a simple sentence satisfactorily.

There's a basic principle involved here, however; and it is that *a child will always do things better if he WANTS to do them*. In other words, if the subjects about which he writes are of real interest to him, he will strive to improve his actual expression, often with unbelievable results.

My first suggestion, then, is that before you tackle the *technique* of written work, you make sure in your mind that the child's *subjects* are worth while and interesting to him.

THE TECHNIQUE OF WRITTEN EXPRESSION

Now we come to this difficult matter of *how* to write about these subjects. Here it seems to me that Composition in most schools is astonishingly like a football match. The opposing teams line up like this:

The child bursting to express himself in writing

versus

The need for

(*a*) Good handwriting; (*b*) Good spelling; (*c*) Accurate grammar; (*d*) Punctuation; (*e*) Neatness; (*f*) Margins, dates, titles, etc.

The unfortunate child has some very formidable opponents, and all too often the teacher, who should be the referee, ranges himself on the side of the opponents.

How do *you* stand in this? Do *you* by overmuch insistence on spelling, grammar, handwriting, etc., kill the natural urge to write?

This harmful effect is very easily brought about. Imagine, for example, a child writing about a trip to the zoo. Obviously he will write about chimpanzees, hippopotamuses, elephants, and parakeets, and equally obviously he will spell some of their names incorrectly.

Would *you* descend on him in wrath and make him write out his errors ten times? Many teachers would, but what is the result? The child will be very careful to write about cats and dogs next time!

Thousands of children adopt this 'ca' canny' policy in their written work, and all because of teachers who suffer from a form of 'red-pencil sadism'. I cannot stress too strongly that the ridiculous habit of marking *every* error in *every* composition is harmful to progress.

I don't mean that you should never mark *any* errors. But I *am* going to suggest:

1. That you cut down your red-pencil work; and,
2. That you tackle handwriting, grammar, and spelling *separately* from the composition lesson, and that during composition these points become of secondary importance to *expression*, or 'content'. By 'separately', however, I do not mean that no cross-reference will be made between lessons.

I will deal with the 'red-pencil work' later, so let's look first at handwriting, grammar, and spelling.

. . . . .

Now a child must have help in these things, even if you don't allow them to hinder his writings, and, as I've just implied, that help is best given in two ways:

1. In separate lessons, in which the various techniques are discussed in themselves, their use in written work being strongly implied throughout.
2. By reference to, but not overwhelming insistence on, these techniques, or some of them, *before* and *after* written expression periods.

Thus, when a child is writing, he is not pestered by too many technical hindrances, yet he does in fact spend other periods hearing about those technical points.

Let's see what sort of things can be done to help him in these 'other periods'.

HANDWRITING

Primary School children need definite practice in handwriting. You must obviously fall in with the style in use through the school, and this may mean that you have to learn it yourself, for *your writing must set an example.*

One day, however, you may have to think about the thorny problem of 'What style is best?'

There are two broad schools of thought on this, each with its slight variations.

1. *The 'Joint-Script' Advocates*

Teachers who favour joint-script argue that this is the simplest, clearest, and *most-easily-learnt* form of flowing hand. There is no sudden change-over to a brand-new alphabet. The child simply begins to join together, where convenient, the script letters he has been printing since the Infant School. He begins to write, the argument goes, smoothly, pleasantly, and painlessly, and there is an excellent link with Art and design.

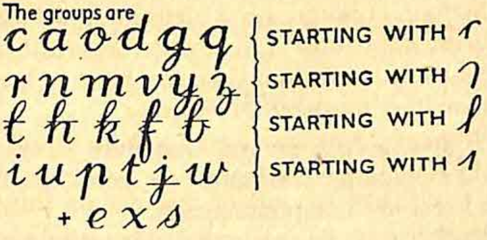
Common sense is all on the side of joint-script, though some teachers make unnecessary labour by insisting on a curious approach through the circle and the straight line. I would point out, however, a factor which may be forgotten, but which I have often noticed. Children *like* to be able to say: "Daddy, I started 'proper writing' today!" And those who do joint-script never reach that wonderful stage.

Well, there you are: common sense versus psychology. So let's look at this 'proper writing'.

2. *The 'Cursive' Merchants*

Now I know that most people decry 'copper-plate' or 'civil service' handwriting these days, but there *is* that point that children like to be able to say that they can do some form of 'proper writing'. Whether you think the pleasure they thus get is worth the trouble you have to take in teaching a flowing hand is another matter.

If you're interested, though, I'll make brief suggestions for an easy method of teaching a flowing alphabet.



All the small letters, with three exceptions, fall into four groups. They can thus be taught in these groups, and children enjoy mastering them. Words and sentences can be made up by the children, using mainly letters from a particular group. The only points to stress are:

(*a*) The forefinger must be *above* the penholder;
(*b*) the elbow should be well into the side;
(*c*) the nib must 'walk on its two legs', so that the downstrokes are thicker than the upstrokes.

All this may sound old-fashioned, but I've seen many children, even seven-year-olds, doing and enjoying this style. And it *has* a style, which is more than one can say for joint-script.

Practice Lessons

Now for the question of practice.

Do you make your children copy passages from the board? And, if so, what pleasure do they derive from it?

I'd suggest that in this, as in many things, there is too much repression. Children must practise—yes—but surely they should be allowed to practise through the medium of something they *want* to write well. Not a composition, for they have to think about so many other things, but by means of a poem that attracts them, a bit of information from the back of a cigarette card, a list of spellings which they want to learn, a roughed-out letter which they wish to send, some notes on another subject, a description for a model or a picture; these are the things they will want to 'look nice', and these are the ways in which they should practise handwriting.

There will be more 'copying from the board' with the cursive style than with joint-script, but if you have a specimen alphabet in front of the class this soulless activity can be reduced to a minimum.

GRAMMAR

Let's look now at the second destroyer of good written expression—the nagging insistence on good grammar. For convenience I include also punctuation.

As with handwriting, I suggest that this technique should be tackled in separate lessons, but two other points are important:

(*a*) The lessons should correlate most strongly with the Composition lessons.

(*b*) Although your aim in a lesson may be that of teaching some piece of grammar, you should never approach it in the technical way so common in the past, and still very common in text-books.

This, then, is the sort of thing that may happen:

"Bring me your story, George. . . . Now here's a sentence George wrote yesterday: 'The boy ate the apple.' What sort of boy was he, George? A *big* boy? Oh, a *fat* boy? What else could he have been? *Bad?* . . . Yes. . . . *Thin?* . . . Yes. . . . *Naughty* . . . *dirty* . . . *short* . . . *tall* . . . *silly*. . . . Let's have them all on the board!

"And what about the apple? What sort of apple might it have been? *Green?* . . . Yes. . . . *Grubby* . . . *red* . . . *rosy* . . . *little*. . . .

"These words make the boy and the apple a lot more interesting, don't they? I think you can all use more of them. They're called Adjectives, if you want to know. Look at the stories you wrote, and see where you could have used some.

"Now let's play the 'Adjective Game' with a dog . . . a house . . . a road. . . ."

This method can be used for parts of speech, sentence construction, plurals—in fact, for all necessary aspects of grammar. Refer to some written work; get the children giving examples, using words, making sentences; and refer at the end to the application of what they have learnt when next they write something.

If you must finish off with exercises, use some of those in your text-book, by all means, but don't base the whole lesson on a text-book; it's usually entirely removed from the child's own written work.

Before you take any grammar, too, ask yourself: "When I've finished this, will it help my children to write better English?" If the answer is "No", don't take it! The Grammar syllabus, like the Arithmetic syllabus, is still cluttered up with pointless junk.

SPELLING

A fear of incorrect spelling rivals the handwriting and grammar hindrances to good written expression. Let's see what we can do to help the child to avoid this fear.

There seem to me to be two sorts of spellings in use by children:

(*a*) The words which they ought to be able to spell at different ages. These may be compared with tables in Arithmetic, and should be learnt.

(*b*) The words which a child will use and can read, but which are beyond his ability to spell correctly, or at least easily.

The words which come in the first category should be treated severely by you. The child should be building up a basic spelling vocabulary, and if he is lazy over this he should be encouraged to get down to work on it.

But what of the second category? You may remember my earlier remarks on a child writing about his visit to the zoo. Is it fair to be angry with him for trying to write words which are difficult to spell? Surely his written vocabulary will *never* improve if he is punished every time he 'has a go' at a new word.

You should, then, adopt different attitudes to these two different categories of spellings. Let's look at them separately.

The Basic List

It's all very well for me to say that each child should be building up a basic spelling vocabulary, but your reaction will be: "What words, and at what ages?" The best answer I know is in Professor Schonell's *Essentials in Teaching and Testing Spelling* (Macmillan). This is an excellent book which sets out scientifically to list words which children should be able to spell at different (mental) ages from 7 plus. The words have been carefully chosen from child usage, and they are arranged mainly in small groups of similar structure. For example, one day's work for nine-year-olds consists of the words *vain, plain, obtain, faint*.

There are four groups of such words to be learnt each week, leaving the fifth day for testing and usage. Here, then, is more material for 'ten-minutes-a-day' work, though many children will learn the words in spare time, during register-marking, etc.

A list such as Schonell's, in use throughout the school, can form your 'hard core' for spelling, and if these words are subsequently spelt wrongly they should be corrected.

The learning and testing need not be painful, however. Let children test each other in pairs at odd moments, hold spelling bees, encourage them to make personal dictionaries, fire words at them as they come in from play, and stimulate a pride in quick and accurate knowledge of 'My Spelling List'.

The Other Words

Now what of the words which the child can say and read, but can't spell? Is he to be discouraged from writing them? Obviously not; he should be encouraged to *find* out how to spell them *before* writing them. This can be done in three ways:

(*a*) *Consulting a Dictionary*

This is not easy for Primary children, and demands training which you must give. Most school dictionaries are almost useless—the definitions complicate them—but children manage to find some words nevertheless.

(*b*) *Consulting Another Child*

You may frown on this, but here again is training in co-operation instead of copying. However, the interruption may be harmful to the other child, so you may feel that this method is unsatisfactory.

(*c*) *Consulting You*

A word about this: don't let the child say: "Please, how do you spell 'pneumonia'?" Let him say instead: "This is how I'd spell 'pneumonia'; is it right?"—producing a rough note-book or a piece of scrap paper. Here's initiative again, you see, and it's surprising how often these attempts are correct, for the child has had to think for himself. If the attempt is wrong, you can often get him to put it right by means of suggestions or question. If it's hopelessly wrong, tell him the right answer.

These consultations will, of course, take place during composition and other forms of written expression. Children should always be encouraged to record in their personal dictionaries the results of their attempts and discoveries.

There are, of course, many other lessons from which words may be taken, and you may be using spelling text-books in which words are grouped according to 'interests' (e.g. 'Farm' words, 'Breakfast' words, 'Traffic' words, etc.). You will use word-games of different sorts—cross-words, codes, jumbled letters.

All these methods, if lively and stimulating, and not dreary and parrot-like, will help to build up this extra spelling vocabulary, over and above the basic list. And, of course, such activities help with speech and reading also.

MARKING

Having made suggestions on help with handwriting, grammar, and spelling, I must return to the purpose of all your work on these things—the improvement of the child's written expression.

You will refer constantly to this in your 'technique' lessons, many of which will have arisen from Composition lessons, but you will always be faced with the problem of marking the written work itself.

As I have said before, I deplore 'red-pencil sadism'. I visualise, every week, piles of composition books being tackled by throngs of teachers with a fierce look in their eyes and red pencils in their hands. Then I see those compositions—most of them the pride of their writers—lying sullied and slashed with red, to be laboriously corrected in every detail.

Heart-rending as this picture may be, I nevertheless realise that a child should not be allowed to perpetrate glaring mistakes without having his attention drawn to some of them, and without being conscious that there may be others.

What I have said about handwriting and grammar, and particularly about spelling, may help a great deal to *prevent* mistakes, while allowing expression to develop; and obviously prevention is better than cure.

There remains a certain amount of curing to be done, and this should be as painless and stimulating as possible. It should *not* be done—at least in the Primary School—by means of one of those elaborate marking codes which contain a string of fancy symbols, each representing some slight form of error. Some of these are as complicated as any war code.

Your most important aim in marking should be to *have the child with you.* It is worth while going to a lot of trouble to achieve this. It *can* be done, if you seize chances in Arithmetic practice, Handwork, Reading, Art, etc., and throw in a little of the lunch-time. If you are not able or prepared to do this, try at least to mark a few pieces of written work each week in the presence of the child, taking different children in succeeding weeks.

This should not be 'marking' in the strict sense, but rather going through and discussing the work with the child, and drawing his attention to errors. The worst mistakes (e.g. basic spellings) can be suggested as corrections. But you will concentrate on the composition as a whole, rather than on its dissection.

Work which is marked away from the children is the remaining problem. I suggest this solution:

Say to the children *before* they write: "I'm going to mark *what you write* [i.e. 'content'] as usual, so make it as interesting as possible. This week, though, I'm going to look at the *spelling* as well, so I'll save a few marks for that. Off you go!"

The following week you may say, for example: "The spelling was a lot better last week, because you thought about it specially. This week I'm going to mark the way you say things, as usual, but I think we'd better try brushing up the *handwriting* as well, so I'll watch that in particular."

You see my aim? Children have too many fears when writing. By stressing the 'content' every time, plus only *one* aspect of technique to be marked, you help them to write more freely and happily.

Thoughtless critics will say that a child who knows that (say) spelling will not be marked in a particular week will spell atrociously. This is nonsense. It would be a strangely maladjusted child to possess such cunning, and I have never found the unmarked aspects of composition to suffer in any way; the pride in good work flourishes, red ink or no, and in fact flourishes more as the ink grows less.

A friendly relationship arises from this method of marking. The child feels that you're really trying to help him, instead of being his executioner. And once he feels you're on his side instead of against him his work improves tremendously.

You don't believe it? You shudder at the thought of an unmarked error in a book? Well, why not *try* it sometime? Explain to the children what you're going to do, and once they've got over the shock, see what happens.

. . . . .

I can't conclude this section on written expression without a reminder. In the above remarks I have referred mainly to the written composition in a book. But if you look back at the beginning of the chapter you will remember that I strongly advocated many other forms of written work—written work with a purpose.

Much of this will not be marked. Some of it will be marked by other children. Some will be roughed out first (as grown-ups do), corrected, then written out in fair copy.

All in all, three things will have happened:

1. Children will be writing, happily, in a variety of different ways.

2. Their expression will be improving surprisingly.

3. You'll hardly know what to do with the spare time which you used to devote to slavish marking. Or will you?

CHAPTER X

HELPING CHILDREN WITH ARITHMETIC

A. ARITHMETIC IS ALIVE

WE come now to the last of the accepted basic subjects; and the first thing I'd say is that there's too much of it in Primary Schools. You can fill a child with sweets until he never wants to see another; how much sooner is he heartily sick of Arithmetic, which is presented far more frequently and in a far less palatable form!

Look, then, at your Arithmetic scheme. Look at your syllabus and your time-table, and above all at your children working.

Is the syllabus full of ridiculous ratio and proportion, unreal vulgar fractions, impossible percentages, and fantastic collections of decimals? Does it contain *too much* revision of processes, merely put in to fill up the time? Is it based on a soulless text-book stuffed with numbers? Does it ignore the fact that Arithmetic is *real*?

Look at the time-table. Is it one of those with a marathon Arithmetic lesson the first thing in the morning. Do you *really* expect your children to 'do' Arithmetic for an hour or more? Or is the Arithmetic broken up into more digestible parts by P.T. or playtime or practical work?

Look at the children at work. Can you say, at any time, that *every* child is usefully occupied in learning or practice? Or must you admit:

1. That many children are merely marking time on processes they know, waiting for the others to catch up?
2. That many of the exercises done are dull and pointless (but you've got to fill up the time!)?
3. That the children do far too much work with figures, and far too little with real things?
4. That most of your children hate Arithmetic?

You don't believe the last? Listen to this, then: when 1,200 children in the south of England were asked recently which subject they disliked most, over 40 per cent of the nine- and ten-year-olds plumped for Arithmetic. Spelling and Composition were many lengths behind.

WHAT IS ARITHMETIC?

Now there's no need for this state of affairs. Arithmetic can be alive and active, yet it can be thorough. Even the drill work can be varied and interesting, while the practical application should be quite fascinating. But we *must* get away from this endless grind at 'exercises', this overcrowded syllabus, this eye on the 'scholarship'. Children must learn to work individually or in groups, to mark their own results, to move about doing things with the minimum of disturbance, and to deal with the sort of problems they'll find in real life.

Arithmetic means counting things and measuring things, spending money, making things with accuracy, telling the time, solving practical problems, reasoning, handling rulers and weights and containers and being familiar with them. Why, then, has it deteriorated into the eternal concentration on figures and figures alone?

Probably because of the need for *drill* in those figures. Yes, the child must learn to handle them with confidence, speed, and accuracy, before he can do real things with figures. And that, I think, is where we have come unstuck, in that the means has gradually replaced the end. Figure drill, instead of being the practice necessary for the tackling of realistic problems, has become almost the whole of Arithmetic in itself. 'Problems' are now regarded as almost another subject!—a subject, too, dreaded by both teacher and child.

Because of this curious situation, then, I am deliberately leaving the basic drill work in Arithmetic till later in this chapter, and talking now about *real* Arithmetic. I feel very strongly that the thousands of figure-choked children in Primary Schools can come to enjoy that hated early-morning lesson if a little imagination is brought into it.

First, then, here are a few suggestions for real life Arithmetic.

SOME SUGGESTIONS

1. A Shop

I know how maligned is the 'school shop'. Only recently a teacher newspaper correspondent spoke scathingly of a newly trained teacher who dared to suggest that shopping activities might help his children to learn Arithmetic. How stupidly short-sighted is this idea that such work is merely sugar-coating to the children, or alternatively a sop to the Inspector! A classroom shop *is* Arithmetic, and through it children can learn more about many aspects of figures than by all the soul-searing drill in the world. *But that learning must be organised.*

You will therefore need to plan the more active work carefully, and I suggest that the safest way with a large class is to work *as a class* at first.

Have two children out at a time. Let one choose items to buy, calling out the prices. The whole class can record these prices, and total up the 'bill' as the shopkeeper is doing it. A class check does your marking for you. The shopper tenders money, and the class can be invited to suggest ways of paying the bill with various coins. You then suggest an 'overpayment', so that the two children at the shop with their coins, and the class in their books, have to work out the change.

Here, you may note, is a class 'doing' addition and subtraction of money, through the eyes and hands of two of its members. Multiplication and division can be developed in the buying of *numbers* of items, or of items priced in dozens, etc., or through problems posed by you ("8 of these cost 18*s*.; George is buying only one; put down its price").

In such a lesson quite a lot of children can take a turn at the shop, yet the whole class has had concentrated and enjoyable practice in money sums. When the teaching of new techniques becomes necessary the children will *want* to learn them.

Still working with two children and the class, or referring to the shop yourself, you can devise similar practice in the four rules of *number* (by counting quantities of articles); *weights*

Dramatic work is important in speech training. But before children can act well they need much practice in miming. These children are miming trees in Lear's poem, *The Jumblies*.

(Above)
Composition books are not very exciting; but writing letters to other schools is *real* Composition (and very much better!). Blame the absorption of these children for their incorrect posture!

(Opposite)
Once a child begins to read, he should be able to *use* his ability. These children are studying different topics in a variety of reference books.

There's a lot of mechanical work necessary in arithmetic, but the ability to do sums should always be related to real things. These children are measuring with a chain. Maybe it's only a word in a table to *your* class.

(tea, vegetables, sweets); *capacity* (milk, vinegar, paraffin); and *length* (ribbon, cloth, string).

You can, in fact, devise a quite thorough Arithmetic syllabus based on a shop, but I do not suggest that you attempt it. Use the shop sparingly, but use it at all age-levels. And after the type of class-work described above, try these developments:

1. Allow a group each day to *play* at shopping quite freely while you are doing other work with the class. This can be perfectly controlled and unobtrusive, even if you don't think so at the moment!
2. Allow children to shop at spare times, playtimes, and lunch-times.
3. Share the money and goods among pairs or groups of children throughout the classroom during some lessons. Let them make up sums as they like, checking each other while you move among them.
4. Let the actual shop fade into the background at times, and set drill sums and problems based on it.

I've referred to the 'shop' without suggesting what form it should take. This obviously depends on the space you have. It may range from a few articles on a window-ledge to an ambitious affair on a couple of tables, or even a department store in a spare room. However large or small it may be, four things should be borne in mind:

1. The *children* should bring the goods, and write letters to firms requesting dummies.
2. The *children* should make the money—or some of it—by 'rubbing' or drawing.
3. The *children* should make the price-labels.
4. The *children* should arrange the goods, chalk up prices and notices, and keep things tidy.

It should, therefore, be *their* shop—in turn of course—so forget about that beautiful display *you* were going to arrange!

I would remind you, in passing, of an earlier suggestion that a shop is an ideal Centre of Interest for children. Over and above the valuable Arithmetic work and the training in group and pair-working, there's much Geography, History, English, etc., which can arise from or be connected with the topic.

But, as I've said before, don't overdo it. Children can easily tire of any topic, however interesting, if they meet it all day and every day.

2. A Miniature Shop

People in flats have window-boxes instead of gardens. Large classes in small classrooms may be forced to evolve a miniature shop. Put one along the picture-rail. Let the children collect real articles at as many different prices as possible, and let them attach the prices so that they can be clearly seen from the back of the room.

This collection can be used for endless money sums with the younger children, for daily written and oral mental work with the older ones, and for odd snap questions at any time of the day.

Use a long stick to point, and make up your own questions, e.g.:

"How much for this . . . this . . . and this?" (+)
"Change from 2*s.* 6*d.* if you buy this . . .?" (−)
"Cost of four of these . . .?"(×)
"I bought six of one thing for 7*s.* 6*d.*; which of the articles was it?" (÷)

Combinations of the four rules can be devised. If each article on the picture-rail is given a letter, children can work in pairs, referring to articles by their letters to avoid complicated explanations of which is meant. Money drill work can also be done with these goods, just as easily as work with a table-square or a clock-face.

3. A Post Office

Another well-known, much sneered at, but extremely valuable activity is the class or school Post Office. Set one up with strips of wood, old wire-netting, and a spare desk or two. After this piece of practice in measuring, let the children bring along used stamps, make their own stamps by measuring and perforating one-inch squares (or mothers will do it with a sewing machine). Let them make postal orders, savings stamp books, a postmarking stamp from a printing set, a telephone from Meccano or wood, money as for the shop, envelopes, bank books, a post-box, and other things which they will suggest.

Then try the following activities:

1. **Mental Arithmetic** based on *½d., 1d., 1½d., 2d., 2½d.* stamps (and, of course, postal orders, etc., for older children).

2. **Buying and selling** work, first with the class, then with pairs and groups, as described in connection with the 'shop'.

3. **Sums** connected with their own savings, and with similar hypothetical transactions by children at the class Post Office.

4. **Measuring** practice lessons in the making of the booklets and envelopes mentioned above. An ordinary envelope, for example, measures 4¼ in. by 3¼ in.—a good piece of practice. Children should be encouraged to discover different sizes of envelopes, too.

5. Class exercises on **weights,** based first on actual weighing of parcels by individuals at the Post Office, and then on weights suggested by you or the children. Letter post weights (i.e. ounces) and postages will also be used.

6. Exercises, according to age, with sheets of stamps. With younger children these can be used for **counting** and **multiplication** practice (e.g. to show that $6 \times 4 = 4 \times 6$). With older children, home-made square-inch stamps can be used to teach **area.**

7. **Volume** may be introduced simply to the brightest ten-year-olds, with the aid of parcels.

8. Letter-writing, envelope-addressing, stamping, and posting. Letters can be to each other, or to friends or relations.

9. Writing, in reality or pretence, to other towns and countries. Correct addresses and postages should be discovered. Quite useful individual projects can follow this if each child is asked to find out as much as he can about the place he is writing to.

10. Visits to the local Post Office.

11. A talk from a postman.

12. Following the route of a letter in England or abroad.
13. Learning something of the history of the postal service.

As you see, this can well develop into a busy Centre of Interest. I have dealt with this type of work elsewhere, however, so I will just remind you that in the above list you can observe work on the four rules of *number*, *money*, *weights*, *length*, *area*, and *volume*. Quite a wide field!

4. Time-tables

I have always found *time* one of the most difficult conceptions for the Primary School child. Normally his work is restricted to the inevitable clock-face, supplemented by some uninteresting 'problems' from a book.

Why not bring reality into this, as into everything else? You have a *school time-table* on the wall, the local *pillar-boxes* have times marked on them, and above all there are *bus* and *railway time-tables* near to almost every school.

Use these things, then. If you live in Barnstaple, use Barnstaple's times. What can your children care about buses from Lower Slaughter to Stow-on-the-Wold?

Get hold of or make copies of local time-tables; then devise your own problems for the class, based on them. You can spread outwards with older children, and work out long-distance journeys. *Distances* can also be discussed in relation to times.

Centred on these practical examples, you can set drill sums on *seconds*, *minutes*, *hours*, *days*, *weeks*, *months*, and *years*, but interest in these will be maintained only if you keep the practical side always to the fore.

The connection with Geography (distances and journeys by horse, train, ship, air) and with History (time-charts) will be apparent to you.

5. Measuring

You can't teach length sensibly without measuring things; yet many teachers try to do so, working entirely through sums.

Do you do any of the following:

1. Measure children's heights on a scale marked on the wall?

2. Measure books, desks, pencils, handspan, pieces of paper, window-panes, door-panels and dozens of other things which are under children's noses in the classroom?

3. Measure desks, cupboards, tables, and the room itself, for the purposes of plan-making?

4. Discuss and practise the buying of goods by length (ribbon, cloth, wire, timber, etc.)?

5. Give practice *class* lessons in handwork, for measuring drill?

6. Allow children to make *individual* folders, books, little models, etc., requiring measurement?

7. Go out of the school and measure playgrounds, buildings, railings, P.T. markings?

8. Allow each child to make for himself:

   (*a*) a cardboard ruler,
   (*b*) a 'tape-measure' of knotted string?

6. Weighing

You can't teach weight sensibly without scales. Do *you* try? Here are some activities suitable for various ages:

1. Weighing things at all ages. Books, stones, parcels, packets, tins, containers of sand (with which weights can be varied), large light things and small heavy things—weigh them all.

2. (With younger children.) Balancing things (no special weight) to guess the heavier. Balancing a large bunch of feathers against a few tiny pebbles on scales, etc.

3. *Discovering* that 16 oz.=1 lb., and if possible that 14 lb.=1 stone.

4. Practical work with shop goods often sold in fractions of 1 lb. (tea, sweets, sugar, etc.).

5. Much discussion, leading to observation, of the heavier weights (stones, qrs., cwts., tons). What are these used for? (Potatoes, corn, coal.)

6. Children weighing each other and discovering differences.

7. Drill work in the four rules, and conversion, arising from the above activities. These sums, particularly multiplication and division, should be restricted to reasonably practical problems, and not become senseless masses of figures.

7. Capacity

Knowledge of capacity must start from such things as milk bottles and petrol cans.

If you wish to avoid group and individual work you can still teach the *class* through two children, some containers, and a bucket of water. Use school milk-bottles, and others holding $\frac{1}{2}$-pint, 1 pint, and 1 quart. Large glass 1-gallon squash-jars can be obtained if you're lucky.

Again refer constantly to the everyday use of these measures.

8. Area

The conception of area is quite difficult for a young child, and should not be seriously taken before the age of nine.

Again, use square inches, square feet, and a square yard. Paint them on the floor. Cut out square inches and fit them on to rectangles. Have a portable square foot. Remember, too, that these squares can be cut or torn to form irregular shapes which retain the same area.

Ten-year-olds can know something about the acre and the square mile by local application.

9. Other Activities

So far I've done no more than suggest a few ways in which Arithmetic can become alive, and yet cater for some of the normal contents of the syllabus. If you look around you, you will see many other 'arithmetical' activities.

Activities such as these, for example:

1. Making a school garden.
2. Keeping weather records.
3. Recording sports' results.

4. Using shop and advertisement prices.
5. Reading meters.
6. Taking a traffic census.

—— But keep on looking!

. . . . .

I said that I would talk about the necessary figure-drill after I had given you some suggestions about *real* Arithmetic. Mind you, if you look back at those suggestions, you'll see that there is quite a lot of drill among them, made all the more effective by the practical interest.

In the Primary School, however, there must also be much pure figure-work, for training in speed and accuracy. I suggested that there is often too much of this, but I don't want to imply that you should go to the other extreme and do none.

Your biggest bugbear here is no doubt the multiplication tables. The task of learning these so often assumes such terrifying proportions to the child that I would like to discuss it at some length.

B. MULTIPLICATION AND DIVISION

MAKING 'TABLES' EASY

First, I'm going to be awkward as usual, and say that *the child learns far too many tables.* He slogs through eventually from 'One Two is Two' to 'Twelve Twelves are a Hundred and Forty-four', by which time he has learnt the horrible total of 132 separate facts. Yet in doing so he has often (1) failed to learn something which causes more multiplication errors than anything else—*how to multiply by* 0; (2) failed to learn the *division* aspect of the multiplication tables.

What a vast amount of labour has thus been expended for such small returns!

I would like to put to you a method of learning which requires the child to memorise only *thirty-six facts* and *four principles*, but which will enable him to multiply *and divide* anything under the sun. That may seem a tall order, but over and over again I've seen children, bright and dull, become 'table-perfect' in a few weeks by this method.

Four Principles

First, the children must learn these four things:

1. 0×anything, or anything × 0 is *ALWAYS* 0. It doesn't matter whether it's 2, 9, 362, or a steam-engine; when you multiply by 0, the answer is 0.

2. 1×anything, or anything×1, doesn't change the 'anything'. 1×7 is 7; 93×1 is 93; one cucumber is a cucumber, etc.

3. 10×any number, or any number×10—add a 0 to the number. In teaching this you will, of course, refer to the place-values when formulating the rule.

4. 3×4=4×3; 9×7=7×9, etc. This principle of 'equivalence' is easily taught by means of dots on the blackboard, counters, etc. Yet most children, having learnt the two aspects as separate facts, don't realise their relationship for years.

Thirty-six Facts

When children have learnt the above principles, they can begin to learn the thirty-six facts. You may think I'm cheating when you see them, for each 'fact' is four-facts-in-one, but children *do* learn each as a composite visual, auditory, and number-unit. One of them is shown at the top of the opposite page.

Arranged as shown, on a card, say eight inches by eight inches, the figures on this card tell the child four things at a glance:

$$\begin{array}{r} 7\times9=63 \\ 9\times7=63 \\ 63\div9=\ 7 \\ 63\div7=\ 9 \end{array}$$

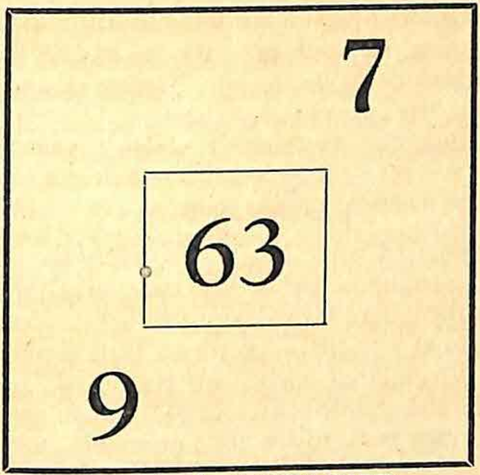
$$\left(\text{And, of course, } \begin{array}{r} 9 \\ 7\overline{)63} \end{array} \text{ and } \begin{array}{r} 7 \\ 9\overline{)63.} \end{array}\right)$$

You or he can point to each figure as he says these facts.

All the thirty-six facts are also on the opposite page arranged in block-form for *your* convenience.

You'll notice at once some absent friends. I'll soon explain them:

MULTIPLICATION AND DIVISION



Example of a **FACTS CARD**

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18
3		9	12	15	18	21	24	27
4			16	20	24	28	32	36
5				25	30	35	40	45
6					36	42	48	54
7						49	56	63
8							64	72
9								81

The 'thirty-six facts', arranged in a block for your convenience (though each should be abstracted and displayed on a card for children).

1. The 10 times table is a waste of time. If children have learnt the third 'principle' above, why should they learn this table?

2. Why on earth does anybody learn the 11 times table? It's absurdly easy up to 99, anyway, and in any case by far the

quickest way to multiply by 11 is by long multiplication; you simply *add*!

3. The 12 times? Well, here my conscience troubles me a little. A child *must* know it eventually, because of its value with pence and feet. But I don't think it should be taught with the number tables. It should be presented realistically, and then learnt, when you deal with *money* and *length*.

Learning the Facts

Having prepared your invaluable thirty-six cards, don't release them all at once. Bring them out two or three at a time, and practise them hard for a day or two before changing them. Refer to them at odd times; construct little problems around the figures; let children make their own cards and test each other; get the class 'table-conscious'; give them tests.

Keep referring back to the four principles, too. Have the class multiplying any of the figures on view by 0, 1, and 10, or multiplying 0, 1, or 10 by any of the figures.

In the early stages use counters or matches to *prove* your facts. *Share* them out to prove the division aspect. Here is your link between drill and reality.

Testing the Facts

When all the thirty-six cards have been dealt with, you should be getting somewhere. I'll describe now a way of testing results which I have found most effective. Speed, accuracy, and above all, excited keenness are all developed by it to an unbelievable extent. My description, though brief, may make the method sound complicated, but it isn't. Here are its main points:

1. You need three pages of a book, square-ruled, for record purposes:

(*a*) Page A, with *times* marked down the left-hand margin (i.e. 2 mins.; 2 mins. 15 secs.; 2 mins. 30 secs.; 2 mins. 45 secs.; 3 mins., etc., up to about 10 mins.).

(*b*) Page B, with the numbers from 36 to 1 down the left-hand margin.

(*c*) Page C, with the 36 'facts' down the left-hand margin, written in any convenient identifiable form (e.g. 2×2, 2×3, 2×4, etc.).

2. Each day the class prepares for a test of 36 questions (say at the back of their exercise books).

3. Each day you prepare 36 questions beforehand on a spare blackboard. As you'll have guessed, each question will test one of the 36 'facts', but you'll vary their position and form every day. So that on one day Question 17 may be '6×9', and in the next test Question 23 may be '54÷6', which tests the same 'fact'. This is not easy to describe, but you'll find that you can put up and scatter the questions with great speed, starting from the '2×2=4' fact, and finishing with the '9×9=81' fact. They will not, of course, be in that order in the test.

4. On the word "Go!", you reveal the day's questions and look at your watch. The children start rapidly writing the answers.

5. As each child finishes, he shoots up a hand. You, with your eye on the watch, call out the time he has taken, and make a mark at the side of that time on Page A, moving down a column under the day's date. The child records his time.

6. Without waiting too long for the stragglers, you stop work, and the children mark their answers. In a dated column on Page B you indicate the *numbers* of children who got 36 right, 35 right, and so on.

7. You then ask: "Who got No. 1 wrong?", etc., and record on Page C the number of errors in connection with each fact, again down a dated column.

And that's the end of the test.

I said it would sound complicated, but read all that again, visualise it happening, and above all, *try it*. You'll see how easy it is.

You'll see, too, its values:

1. Each child is competing against himself each day, trying to beat yesterday's time, and trying to get 'more right'. And he enjoys it—honestly he does!

2. *You* have a record of:

(*a*) The increased *speed* of the class as a whole (Page A);

(*b*) The increased *accuracy* of the class as a whole (Page B);
(*c*) *The facts which cause most trouble* (Page C).

3. In a short time, especially if you make use of this record of difficulties on Page C, each child will be able to snap out correct answers without even having to think.

And when he does, as I said earlier, he'll be able to multiply and divide anything under the sun.

What more could you ask!

MULTIPLICATION 'SUMS'

The learning of the facts just described will of course be accompanied by the doing of sums, so here I'll suggest the logical steps in this drill work, first in multiplication.

During table practice the child will learn to set down a fact thus:

$$\begin{array}{r} 3 \\ \times 4 \\ \hline 12 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

He will also learn that multiplication is a quick way of adding.

He will then be able to do easy sums which involve two or three multiplying processes, without 'carrying'. He should not embark on carrying until he has grasped its principle in his *addition* practice. It then presents no difficulty. The sums with which he practises should often contain a 0.

Long Multiplication

The above practice work, together with real-life problems, games, etc., as previously stressed, should occupy the first two Primary years. Then comes the more difficult long multiplication. The following steps are logical:

1. Short multiplication by 20, 30, etc.

This is a natural development in short multiplication Similar practice in multiplication by 100, 200, etc., can follow

2. The idea of '20 times and 3 times is 23 times'

This step interests children very much. Suppose the problem is to multiply 43 by 23; the approach would be:

"That's stumped us. Who knows his 23 times table? Who knows his 20 times table, then? Yes, it's the 2 times with a 0 on the end! And who knows his 3 times table? Well, let's multiply 43 by 20, and then by 3, and add the two answers together. That should give us 23 times."

First result:

$$\begin{array}{r} 43 \\ \times 20 \\ \hline 860 \end{array} \qquad \begin{array}{r} 43 \\ \times\ 3 \\ \hline 129 \end{array} \qquad \begin{array}{r} 860 \\ +129 \\ \hline 989 \end{array}$$

"Now there's a quicker way than having to write down three sums. Let's put them all down in one."

Second result:

$$\begin{array}{l} 43 \\ \times 23 \\ \hline 860 = 20 \text{ times} \\ 129 = 3 \text{ times} \\ \hline 989 = 23 \text{ times} \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Some teachers do not encourage the writing of '20 times', etc., but I feel that it is helpful for a while, to remind children of what they are actually doing.

3. Multiplying by 100's

This should not be overdone, but it helps to bring home the point that there is no limit to the number of lines possible in a sum.

4. Other developments

(*a*) Plenty of examples with 0's among them;

(*b*) Reversing the sum as a check (e.g. 43 × 23 *and* 23 × 43).

(*c*) Speeding up the process by omitting the 0's when multiplying by 10's, 100's, etc. This can safely be done if the child's attention is drawn to the fact that when he begins to multiply by any figure, *the first figure he discovers goes under the figure he is multiplying by*. E.g.:

$$\begin{array}{r} 274 \\ 346 \\ \hline \ldots 2 \\ \ldots 6 \\ \ldots 4 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

DIVISION 'SUMS'

Division is the most difficult process of all for the child. Much of this difficulty is eased, however, if you remember, as I stressed before, that the division aspect of the facts should be learnt alongside the multiplication aspect. If a child learns that aspect, he will soon be able to set down his sums thus:

$$\begin{array}{r} 4 \\ 3\overline{)12\div} \end{array}$$

Much practical work is necessary here, however, and the child should be clear in his mind that the process has told him *either*

1. That if 12 things are shared among 3 people, each will get four; *or*
2. That if 12 things are grouped into 3's, there will be 4 groups.

There is some difference of opinion as to whether the answers to short division sums should be placed above the line, as depicted here, or below the line, as in other types of sums. The purpose of placing the answer above is, of course, to prepare for long division, but it may confuse the child.

Progressive steps from the simple table work may be as follows:

1. Two figures in the answer, but without complications.
2. One figure in the answer, with a remainder, e.g.:

$$2\overline{)13\div}$$

(The answer being $6\frac{1}{2}$—i.e., '1 still to be divided by 2'. This form will help later with fractions.)

3. Using first two figures as a dividend, two figures in the answer (i.e. practice in 'won't go'), e.g.:

$4\overline{)128}\div$

4. 0's in the dividend and quotient, e.g.:

$2\overline{)206}\div$

—and especially such sums as

$6\overline{)182}\div$

5. Remainder from the 10's column, e.g.:

$4\overline{)92}\div$

The basic process here is that when dividing the 10's there is one 10 left over. On being carried to the units this makes 12 of them still to divide.

When stage 5 is mastered the back of the task is broken. Much further practice will be needed, especially with 0's and remainders, but with the aid of games, real-life situations, and a sensible mixture of activities, the child can begin to think about long division.

Long Division

The first stage in long division is the setting down of the working in a *short* division sum, thus:

$$\begin{array}{r} 76 \\ 6\overline{)456}\div \\ 42 \\ \hline 36 \\ 36 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Then can come the interesting step of dividing by numbers outside the known tables. Children find pleasure in making up tables for this purpose. Let them work out the 13, 14, and 15 times table, and set down long division sums with the aid of these. Bright eight-year-olds can do this, but normally long division would start at age nine.

By slow and graded steps children can move from single-figure answers to double figures, carrying from the 10's. Then they can begin to estimate their answers, by using divisors such as 21, 31, etc., and comparing the 10's figures, e.g.:

$$31/\overline{93\div}$$

"3 into 9 goes three times, so perhaps 31 into 93 will go three times."

Remainders from the units will follow, and then 100's in the dividend, e.g.:

$$42/\overline{168\div}$$

So far, you notice, all answers are apparent, though children should be encouraged to use scrap paper or a margin to check on their assumptions.

This habit will help when they come to the unexpected answers, e.g.:

$$36/\overline{252\div}$$

The expected answer is 8 (25÷3). When the child 'tries' this he will see that the result of his multiplication is too great. He will then 'try' 7.

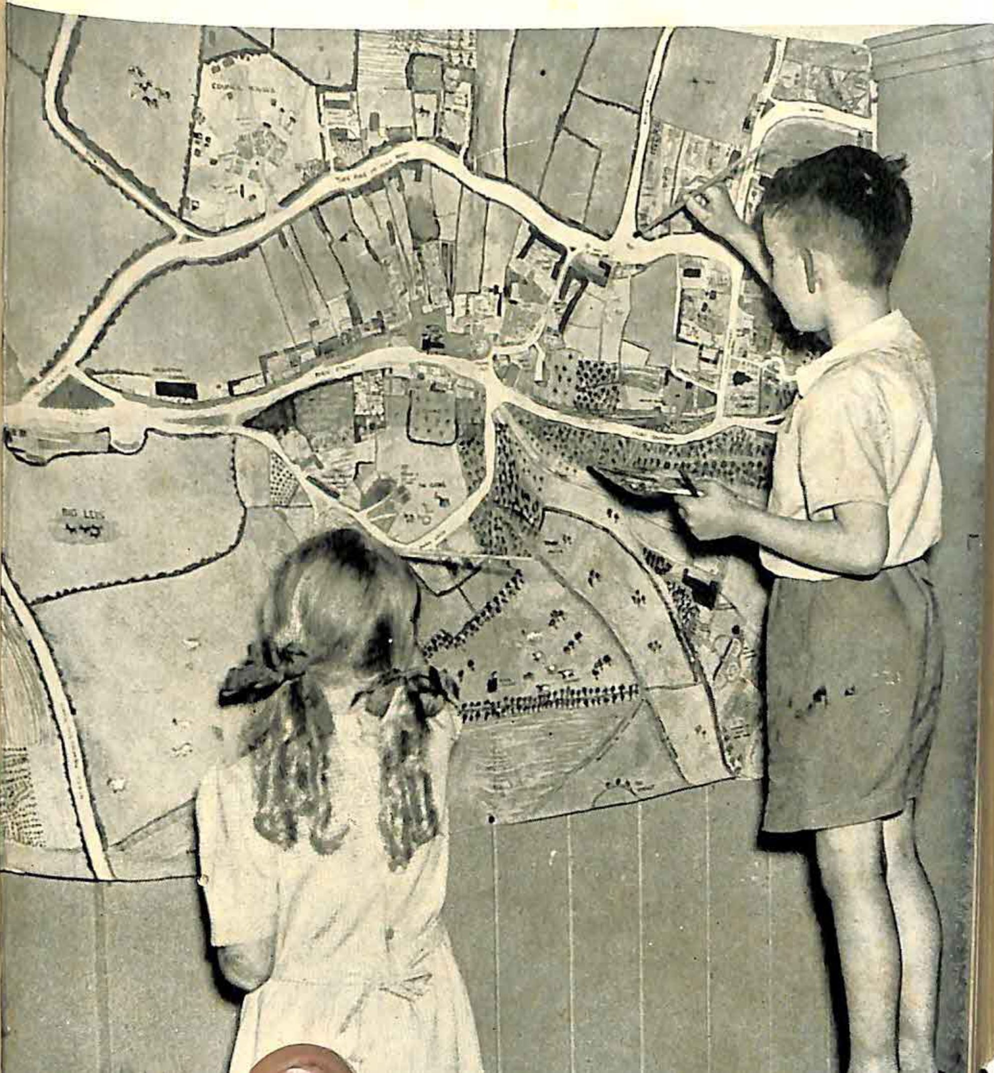
The writing down of trials should not be continued for too long, though the child—and many adults, for that matter—will continue to do so on odd occasions.

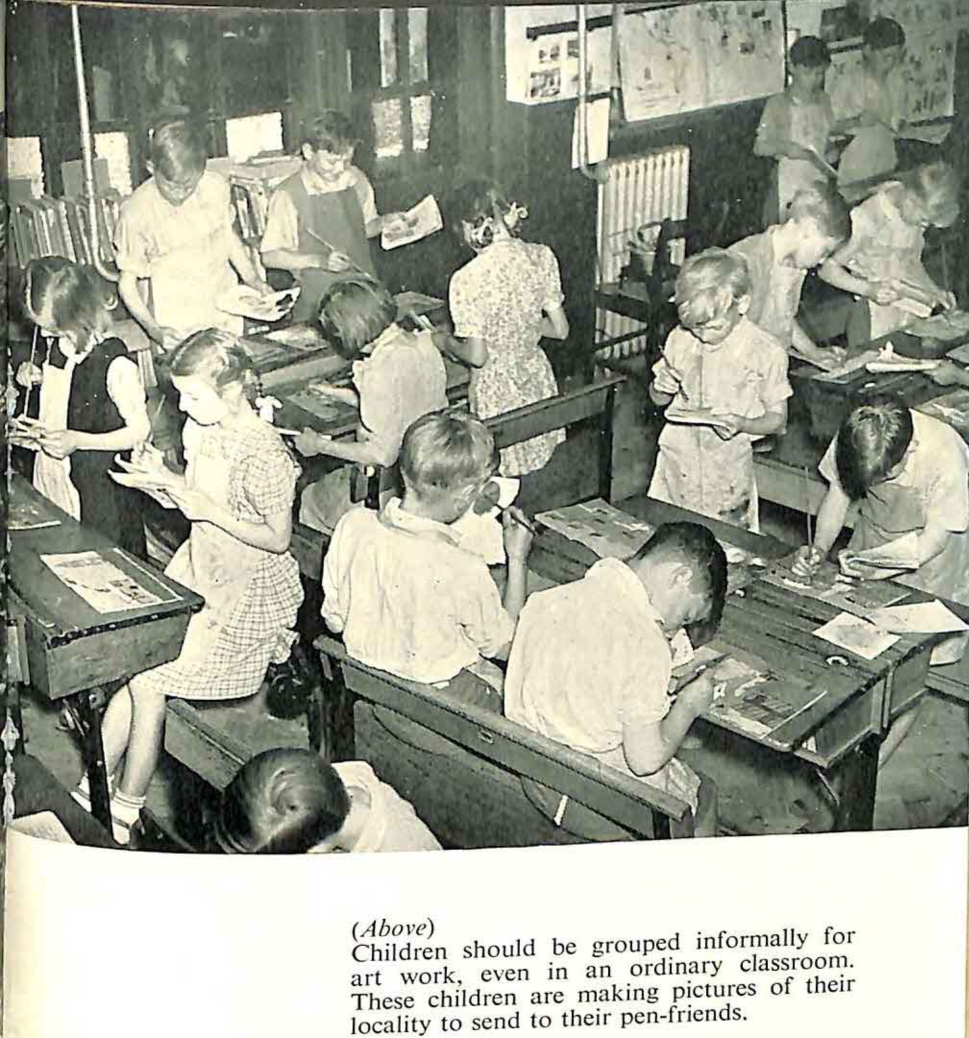
When the first examples of unexpected quotients have been tackled, there is a further graded process, introducing thousands, remainders, and 0's. Any good text-book should contain graded work for this progression.

C. ADDITION AND SUBTRACTION

I suggested that much unnecessary drudgery occurs in the learning of the basic facts in multiplication and division. I'm going to suggest now that the same thing occurs with the learning of addition and subtraction facts: and I shall suggest how much of that toil can be eliminated.

A map of the district means far more than a map of England or the world—if the children *make* it themselves. (Or would you label this Art?)





(Above)
Children should be grouped informally for art work, even in an ordinary classroom. These children are making pictures of their locality to send to their pen-friends.

(Opposite)
Top.—Few schools are without some historical building near by. Yet few children learn the connection between their own environment and the History text-book.

Bottom.—Nature Study should be a study of nature. If you're not as lucky as these children, bring nature to the classroom—for it can't be studied only *in books*.

A more formal type of Handwork in connection with the topic 'Dogs'.

LEARNING THE BASIC FACTS

Most teachers think that there are '100 addition facts', and then '100 subtraction facts', for the unfortunate child to learn. This is nonsense.

Let me explain why I say that.

Many thousands of children learn, for example, that $8+7=15$. Later, and separately, they learn that $7+8=15$. On other occasions they learn that $15-7=8$, and that $15-8=7$. Now surely these four facts constitute one and the same unit, as shown at the top of page 114.

This diagram, if made on a card and sensibly used, will fix in the child's mind four things:

(*a*) $\mathbf{8+7=15}$
(*b*) $\mathbf{7+8=15}$
(*c*) $\mathbf{15-8=\ 7}$
(*d*) $\mathbf{15-7=\ 8}$

and of course:

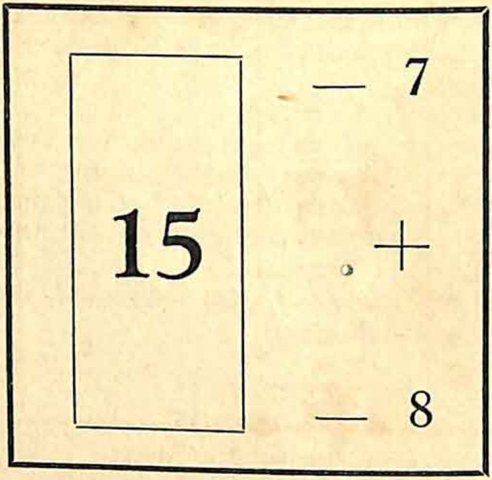
$$\begin{array}{r@{\qquad}r@{\qquad}r@{\qquad}r} \mathbf{8} & \mathbf{7} & \mathbf{15} & \mathbf{15}\\ +\mathbf{7} & +\mathbf{8} & -\mathbf{8} & -\mathbf{7}\\ \hline \mathbf{15} & \mathbf{15} & \mathbf{7} & \mathbf{8}\\ \hline \end{array}$$

By this method, as with multiplication and division, facts are bound up together in the child's mind far more firmly than if they were learnt separately.

Make out cards like these, then. You will notice that I've arranged the numbers differently from the multiplication/division cards, in order to avoid confusion.

Now, instead of 200 facts having to be learnt, you will find that 45 such cards (plus one 'principle') will cover every possible addition or subtraction fact that the child will ever need. (There is one exception to that statement: sometimes it is necessary to take away a number greater than 9 in a single operation. This may occur in the 'equal addition' method, and with pence, ounces, etc. But this operation is not covered by the alleged '200 facts' either!)

ADDITION AND SUBTRACTION

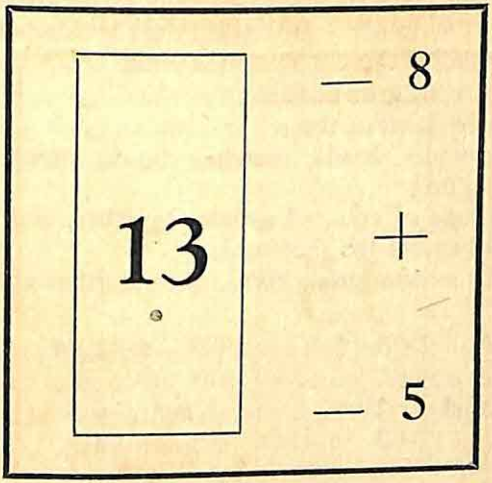


Example of a FACTS CARD

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
2		4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
3			6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
4				8	9	10	11	12	13	+
5					10	11	12	13	14	and
6						12	13	14	15	—
7							14	15	16	
8								16	17	
9									18	

The 'forty-five facts' arranged for your convenience.
They should *not* be shown to the children like this.

The 'principle' I mentioned concerns the addition or subtraction of 0. Prove to the child that it makes no difference to a figure when you add or subtract 0. Make sure he believes



Another **FACTS CARD**

this, and you will save him a lot of 'parrot-work' of the '2+0=2', '3+0=3', and '5−0=5' variety.

The **45 facts** are given in table form on the opposite page.

I don't suggest that you present this table to the children. They would confuse it with the more common, and similar-looking, multiplication square. I have merely arranged it thus for your convenience, and to save the space which would be needed to reproduce the 45 'four-facts-in-one' cards in detail.

To make a card, take any figure from the body of the diagram, and the figures at the extreme top and extreme left of it will be its 'colleagues'. Find one of the 13's, for example, and you will see that it comes under 8 and level with 5. The card you evolve for the children is shown at the top of this page. As with the other example, it shows, at one and the same time:

8+5=13
5+8=13
13−5= 8
13−8= 5

(And, of course, the same sums in column form.)

You can take these 45 main figures in turn, and make cards in this way. Obviously you wouldn't try to teach them all at once, but practise them a few at a time. And that practice should be as realistic as possible.

Try activities such as these:

1. Use counters, beads, matches, buses, sheep. Help the child to *count* first.
2. Put groups of counted articles together, and take away groups, to illustrate the fact-cards.
3. Practise writing down sums, both in rows and columns. E.g.:

$$2+3=5 \qquad\qquad 6-2=4$$

$$\text{and}\quad \begin{array}{r} 2\\ +3\\ \hline 5\\ \hline \end{array} \qquad\qquad \text{and}\quad \begin{array}{r} 6\\ -2\\ \hline 4\\ \hline \end{array}$$

4. Make up personal work-cards, with answers on the back.
5. Use the clock-face for addition and subtraction.
6. Play various scoring games involving dice-shaking, arrow-spinning, and even darts!
7. Apply knowledge regularly to milk-bottles, team-points, pencils, rubbers, etc.
8. Show subtraction in its various ways. E.g. "What is the difference between 3 and 7?"; "How much more is 7 than 3?"; "How much less is 3 than 7?", etc.

This type of work should be constantly in evidence during the child's first Primary year. Speed-tests, similar to those I described previously, should be given, and records kept. And when you feel that the children know the 45 fact-cards and the one 'principle', they should be fully equipped to begin addition and subtraction in earnest.

NEXT STEPS IN ADDITION

The next stage in addition is the broaching of the 'carrying' idea. This should be done with real items, so that the children can see, for example, that with 17 matches and 8 matches, the

8 and the 7 together make up another 10 to be added to the one already there, as well as 5 units.

Children should get used to thinking in terms of place-values, or they will make the curious mistake of treating the 'new ten' and the 'one already there' as two separate figures to be put alongside each other. E.g.:

$$\begin{array}{r} \mathbf{17} \\ +\ \mathbf{8} \\ \hline \mathbf{115} \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Make a gradual change-over from practical demonstrations to the doing of sums, but continue to apply the new knowledge in practical problems. Then introduce the carrying of tens to the 100's, and the addition of 100's also.

There is no need to go further than this. Huge sums are absurd except for amusement. You should concentrate now on practice and application; adding three or four numbers; and adding in rows with carrying. And don't keep on practising when the children can obviously add accurately. Use their knowledge, and revise regularly.

NEXT STEPS IN SUBTRACTION

The next steps in subtraction are more complicated than those in addition. There is little doubt, though, that the method of 'equal addition' is the most accurate, if least easily explained, way of dealing with the occasions when you 'can't take'.

It is perhaps advisable to show children realistically that the adding of a ten to *both* numbers doesn't change the answer. E.g. 7−3 produces the same answer as 17−13, and 14−7 produces the same answer as 24−17.

The process must become mechanical, however, and you should aim to get, as soon as possible, a reaction like this:

$$\begin{array}{r} \mathbf{42} \\ -\mathbf{27} \\ \hline \\ \hline \end{array}$$

'7 from 12 is 5; 3 from 4 is 1'.

The in-between stage of '7 from 10 is 3; 3 and 2 make 5' is unnecessary. When you give 10 to the 2 it becomes 12 immediately.

. . . . .

Well, the last two sections have been rather grim, as they have tried to cram into a small space some thoughts on the teaching of a lot of tricky mechanical steps. I must disperse any head-spinning feeling of depression they may have left with you.

Remember, then:

1. The steps I have so hurriedly mentioned deal with number-work over a period of *four years* (or more!). They are therefore not so all-pervading as they look on paper. Moreover, I have suggested drastic reductions of the facts normally taught.
2. I have said continually, and now say again, that this number-drill is only incidental to, and necessary for, the real arithmetic you'll be doing all the time.

So *please* don't give the child sums day after day. Give him some practice or some new step each day, but *always* let him apply that practice or new step to some real-life situation—if only for five minutes at the end of the lesson.

D. MONEY

No arithmetic is more interesting to the Primary School child than that dealing with money, but nothing, except possibly fractions, can become such hard labour.

Yet how real it all should be! If you have a shop, a post office, a bus, a train, or some similar Centre of Interest living in your classroom, you will never be bothered by children who hate the mechanical processes of money sums. But, as in all arithmetic, you must avoid 'over-mechanisation'.

ADDITION OF MONEY

I must mention briefly the processes which you will have to teach during your varied money activities, and the first of these is addition.

As with addition of number, the first year will be spent in the actual handling of things—in this case, money, tickets, stamps, priced goods, etc.—and in learning the pence table. The combinations of pence which make up 12 (e.g. 9*d.*+3*d.*, 7*d.*+5*d.*, etc.) must be known.

Then will come the setting-down of the sums, and from the beginning the child should learn to regard the figures therein as *money*. E.g. in the sum 9*d.*+4*d.* the child must say: "9*d.* and 4*d.* is 1*s.* 1*d.*", and *not* "9 and 4 make 13". Lack of attention to this is perhaps the most common cause of error.

When pounds are introduced, you may feel that 20 is too large a figure for the child to keep in his head. It is better to deal with the shillings in the early stages in two separate columns, i.e. the 'odd-shillings column' and the 'ten-shilling-note column'. Admittedly it leads to two processes instead of one, but the carrying of 10's to the second column and of 2's to the pounds, is more easily achieved than thinking in 20's.

A sum would thus go like this:

	£	*s.*	*d.*
	1	**14**	**7**
+		**18**	**8**
	2	**13**	**3**

"8*d.* and 7*d.* is 1*s.* 3*d.*, 3*d.* down and carry a shilling. 1*s.* and 8*s.* and 4*s.* make 13*s.*; 3*s.* down and carry the ten-shilling note. 1 and 1 and 1 make 3 ten-shilling notes, or £1 and 1 ten-shilling note. Put the ten-shilling note down and carry the £1. £1 and £1 make £2."

Try to avoid making a separate column headed 'f' for the farthings. If children have often handled coins, they should find no difficulty in adding fractions of 1*d.*

Generally speaking, first-year children should not go beyond the addition of shillings; in the second year pounds should be introduced up to a total of £10; and the subsequent years should deal with larger sums, though not just for the sake of 'doing sums'.

And all the time children should be tackling real things, real prices, real bills, real problems.

SUBTRACTION OF MONEY

In subtraction you have the complication of 'shopkeeper's change'. In this the shopkeeper 'builds up' the change, from the amount due to the amount tendered. Children should learn this method in shopping practice, and be able to do it mentally in small sums. The first year should therefore be spent in learning money and prices as described above, the subtraction or 'difference' aspect being learnt alongside the addition aspect.

Later, though, it is preferable to learn subtraction sums in the same way as subtraction of number (i.e. by the method of 'equal addition'). In his second Primary year, then, the child should be able to work like this:

$$\begin{array}{rrr} £ & s. & d. \\ \mathbf{3} & \mathbf{14} & \mathbf{8} \\ \mathbf{-1} & \mathbf{16} & \mathbf{10\frac{1}{2}} \\ \hline \mathbf{1} & \mathbf{17} & \mathbf{9\frac{1}{2}} \\ \hline \end{array}$$

"½*d.* from 1*d.* is ½*d.*; 11*d.* from 1*s.* 8*d.* is 9*d.*; 7*s.* from 14*s.* is 7*s.*; 2 ten-shilling notes from 3 ten-shilling notes is 1 ten-shilling note; £2 from £3 is £1."

(That, of course, was an extreme example of 'short-cut' equal addition work.)

Third- and fourth-year children should be able to do sums over £10. In all years, as always, realistic application should be continuous.

MULTIPLICATION OF MONEY

Short multiplication is possible with eight-year-olds, provided that they know the pence-to-shillings table thoroughly. Later it can be extended to pounds, working as before by ten-shilling notes. As with all money sums, children should think in terms of money, and not simply in figures.

Long multiplication of money should not be taught to the normal Primary School child. If you wish to take it with bright children as a basis for Grammar School work, encourage them to cut out unnecessary working. It is best set down thus:

£	*s.*	*d.*
2	**17**	**6½**
		×24
69	**1**	**0**
21	**13**	**12**
48	**240**	**144**
	168	——
	——	**156**
	421	

The working figures are written in the shape of addition sums *under* the answer line. The first line of each addition sum is the figure (if any) 'carried' from the previous column; then come the lines of the multiplication working. (The multiplier and the multiplicand can be interchangeable, whichever is the more convenient.) The division of the totals by 12 and 20 can be worked mentally, the answers being carried to the next column as they emerge, and the remainders going into the answer line of the sum. A separate farthings column can be used if desired.

I repeat, though, that you should take this with only the brightest children.

DIVISION OF MONEY

Short division should rarely be taught before the third year, and it is often helpful then if the sums are set down the 'long division' way. You can't expect a child to 'carry' large figures in his head.

The actual multiplying of the carried figure should be done mentally if possible, the result being written down in the next column as it emerges, to add to the figure already there before proceeding to divide.

Long division, again, should be taught only to the brightest children. It may be set down thus:

	£	s.	d.	f.
	2	17	$6\frac{1}{2}$	
24/	69	1	0	0
	48	420	156	48
	—	—	—	—
	21	421	156	48
		24	144	48
		—	—	—
		181	12	
		168		
		—		
		13		

In this case a farthings column is used, and the answer, 2, is written down as $\frac{1}{2}$*d.* Many children would see this particular answer without the need for a special column.

OTHER WORK

Two other forms of practice work in connection with money should be mentioned:

1. *Conversion*

This is a more sensible name for the processes often curiously called 'reduction', since one is actually converting from one form of unit to another. Children of 8 should practise conversion either way, up to £1. At age 9 higher figures in pounds can be tackled, though absurd sums should never be set.

2. *Fractional Parts*

Occasional exercises with older children on fractions of 1*s.* and £1 are interesting. They can devise equivalence charts to show (e.g.) that 8 half-crowns = £1, therefore 2*s.* 6*d.* = £$\frac{1}{8}$.

. . . . .

Money is a real, everyday commodity. It is necessary to learn certain mechanical processes to become familiar with it. I have dealt briefly with these, but you, I hope, will not make the

mechanics your sole aim. All the time you will count, shop, study price-lists and wages and fares, and keep the work alive.

E. OTHER ARITHMETIC

The amount of superfluous Arithmetic found in some Primary Schools is astonishing. I've discussed everything that I believe the *average* child can confidently tackle, but you may feel that other things are possible, too, so here are a few suggestions on other often-found forms of Arithmetic.

FRACTIONS

Mechanical exercises in fractions are probably the biggest headache in the young lives of many Primary children. There are two possible reasons for this:

1. Fractions have been taught in a purely artificial way and thus mean little more than a harassing set of rules to be learnt.
2. Children are forced, with the threat of the 'scholarship', into doing sums which are far beyond their capacity.

The second point is up to you and your conscience—but I'd like to say something about the first point.

First Steps in Fractions

Early steps towards a *real* knowledge of fractions are so easy and so interesting that it is surprising that they are so often neglected in schools where fractions are 'done'.

Children *share* things from a very early age, and while the sharing of a number of things leads to straightforward division, the *cutting up* of apples, cakes, bars of chocolate, etc., is the obvious way of leading up to fractions.

Even in the first and second Primary years the child should have a firm knowledge of what a *half* and a *quarter* imply.

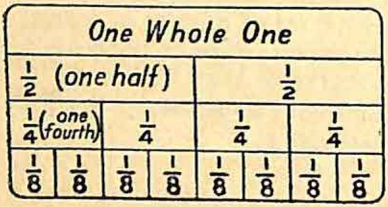
He should also realise that in addition to halves and quarters of whole articles, it is possible to divide up some things so that the fractions can be expressed in another way, e.g.:

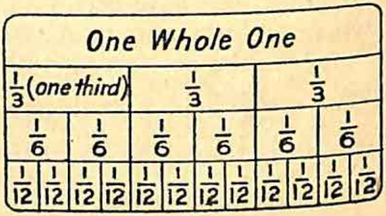
$\frac{1}{2}$ of 1*s*. is 6*d*.; $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1 ft. is 3 in.; $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. is 8 oz.

It is not until much practical work of this kind has been done—with money, weights, lengths, liquid, and by cutting up—that the more abstract 'fraction-diagrams' should be tried. It is absurd for the child to be drawing squares or oblongs labelled 'One Whole One', when the shape itself is the only 'whole one' that enters his head. He must realise that the square (or whatever it is) merely represents 'a whole *anything*'. You should reiterate that point even more when you come to equivalence diagrams or boards.

The equivalence idea soon comes to a child who knows fractions realistically. He knows that two farthings make a halfpenny, though he is a little taken aback to see them written down as $\frac{2}{4}$d. He knows that 2 quarters of a foot are the same length as $\frac{1}{2}$ a foot, and so on.

Thus you can introduce equivalence diagrams, and extend knowledge to eighths. You can introduce thirds and sixths and twelfths, and then the '$\frac{1}{5}$, $\frac{1}{10}$, $\frac{1}{20}$ family'.





Adding and Subtracting Fractions

Practical addition and subtraction should be possible in the third year, with the aid of diagrams or boards. The child can *see* (and *feel*) that, for example, $\frac{1}{2}+\frac{1}{4}=\frac{3}{4}$, and $\frac{3}{8}+\frac{1}{2}=\frac{7}{8}$; and that $\frac{5}{8}-\frac{1}{2}=\frac{1}{8}$, and $\frac{3}{4}-\frac{3}{8}=\frac{3}{8}$.

He will soon notice that he has in fact had to 'change' one of the fractions concerned. It can then be pointed out that when it is necessary to change a denominator the fraction is not altered in actual value if the numerator undergoes the same treatment, e.g.: $\frac{1}{2}=\frac{2}{4}=\frac{4}{8}$, and $\frac{4}{12}=\frac{2}{6}=\frac{1}{3}$. Beware of referring to the process as multiplication or division.

Top-class children should be able to work normal mechanical addition and subtraction sums, though the denominators should not exceed 24. Occasional whole numbers should be introduced into the work. The children should be able to recognise at once when the answer exceeds a whole one.

Multiplying Fractions

Multiplication will also start in a practical way. Diagrams will make it clear that (e.g.) $\frac{1}{4}\times 3=\frac{3}{4}$, and that $\frac{2}{5}\times 2=\frac{4}{5}$. Whole numbers will be used at first, and the connection between (e.g.) $\frac{4}{5}\times 2$ and $\frac{4}{5}$ *of* 2 will be proved.

The child will soon see that multiplying by a whole number means in fact the multiplication of the numerator.

Multiplication of a fraction by a fraction can also be demonstrated, e.g.: $\frac{1}{2}\times\frac{3}{4}$. This, being the same as $\frac{1}{2}$ of $\frac{3}{4}$ can be seen from an equivalence diagram to be $\frac{3}{8}$. But $\frac{1\times 3}{2\times 4}=\frac{3}{8}$. Therefore the numerators are multiplied together, and so are the denominators.

Division of Fractions

This is the most difficult mechanical rule to prove convincingly, and I sometimes feel that it saves heartburning to give children the rule and leave it at that.

However, you can demonstrate a few simple sums, e.g.: $\frac{1}{4}\div 5$. Can we divide $\frac{1}{4}$ into 5 parts? Yes, from the diagram we can see that there are $\frac{5}{20}$. So $\frac{1}{4}\div 5=\frac{5}{20}\div 5=\frac{1}{20}$. We have *divided* the numerator by 5, just as in multiplication we *multiplied* the numerator.

Division by fractions can also be shown, e.g.: $\frac{3}{4}\div\frac{1}{2}$. This can mean 'How many $\frac{1}{2}$'s in $\frac{3}{4}$?' A diagram shows us that there is only one $\frac{1}{2}$ and half of another, or $1\frac{1}{2}$ halves. Thus $\frac{3}{4}\div\frac{1}{2}=1\frac{1}{2}$.

The inversion rule should then be given. I have sometimes tried to explain it to bright children as follows:

E.g.: $\frac{3}{4}\div\frac{2}{3}$.

"This means 'How many $\frac{2}{3}$ in $\frac{3}{4}$?' Let's find first how many *thirds*. To find how many thirds in *anything*, we multiply by 3, don't we? Right: $\frac{3}{4}\times 3$ will tell us how many thirds. But we want them in twos, don't we, to find out how many $\frac{2}{3}$? We must divide by 2, then. So we have $\frac{3}{4}\times 3\div 2$, or to do it all at once, $\frac{3}{4}\times\frac{3}{2}$. The $\frac{2}{3}$ has turned over!"

DECIMALS

So much for vulgar fractions. Now for decimal fractions. Children who really understand place-values can see the idea of having a number which is $\frac{1}{10}$ of a unit, and so on, and will appreciate the need for the decimal point when writing it down.

From their knowledge of vulgar fractions they will be able to add and subtract, knowing that every ten tenths make another whole one. *Addition* and *subtraction* sums should then present no difficulty to children who realise that the decimal point is the crucial guide in setting the sums down.

Multiplication by single whole numbers is straightforward, if the decimal point is watched, but when you come to *long multiplication* and multipliers containing decimals it is preferable to work to the 'counting of places' system. It may not be easy to explain, but it is less confusing than other methods. Keep examples to reasonable numbers.

Division by whole numbers is straightforward, again if the decimal point is remembered for the answer also. I feel, however, that *long division* is so difficult in itself that it should not be made even more complicated in the Primary School by the introduction of decimals into the process.

WHAT ELSE?

We've almost reached the end of the normal basic work in arithmetic now, though there will never be any lack of suggestions from above to add to the Primary syllabus.

There are one or two other types of work often done:

1. *Volume*

This should not go beyond the realisation that there is yet a third measurable dimension beyond length and area. Cubic inches should be used, and children will see that to make a cubic foot you need 12 layers of 144, though the actual experiment is impracticable.

2. *Percentages*

I feel that the absurd sums which are often worked in Primary Schools in this connection should be scrapped. Brighter children may understand the principle of percentages and be able to say what 10%, 25%, and 50% of anything amount to, and even to understand Post Office Savings Bank interest, but work should not go beyond such everyday application.

3. *Geometry*

I shall probably get into trouble for not giving more space to this. I do feel that some simple geometry should be done in the Primary School, arising mainly from the work with rulers which I mentioned earlier, and also closely correlated with pattern-making in Art.

Children should know the square, rectangle, right angle, triangle, and something about the circle and the use of the compass. This work, especially in its connection with pattern-making and ruler-knowledge, can start in the first year.

4. *Ratio and proportion, factors, graphs, averages,* and the *metric system*

These are perhaps interesting—even amusing—to bright children. But pity the ordinary child if these things are in *your* syllabus!

. . . . .

Remember, Remember . . .!

I've said my say in arithmetic. I'm sorry if it's been heavy going, and I'm sorry about all that I've missed out. But I'll be happy if you remember only *one* thing, for the sake of the child. And it is—or have I said it before?—*keep your arithmetic real.*

However difficult you find the teaching of these mechanical processes, you'll only make things worse if you drop all practical application under pressure of time. For when you drop that, you drop interest.

Go ahead, then: shop, measure, cut up, draw, count, share, move, make, weigh, pour, observe.

It's all arithmetic.

PART THREE

THE REST OF THE SUBJECTS

CHAPTER XI

THE SUBJECT CALLED GEOGRAPHY

I ALWAYS think it's a good thing to pause occasionally and examine these labels with which our syllabuses have been saddled.

And if you look at Geography, and then at the child, you'll perhaps agree that here is the subject which should help him to understand his world as it *is*, and the things and people that exist and work and move and grow in it.

I said *understand*. And I'll say very emphatically that much teaching masquerading under the name of Geography is no more understandable to the child than are the intricacies of nuclear fission.

What are Eskimos to him, or he to Eskimos? How can he *understand* that peculiar squiggle which he is assured is Australia? What does it mean to him to hear that India is two thousand miles across, or that Everest is 29,141 feet high?

The first and most important thing about Geography, then, is that *it must start always from the things the child knows*.

All right, examine your last Geography lesson. What did it deal with? And how was it linked throughout with something well known to the child?

Were the Eskimo homes compared with *his* home? Was the distance across India compared with *his* holiday journey? And did you expect him to *understand* a map of Australia before he'd even got used to a local Ordnance Survey map?

Remember, then, five things:

1. It is difficult for a child to understand something he has never seen.

2. It is absurd, therefore, to deal with things in distant lands until he has learnt something about similar things in his own locality.

Creative Handwork in connection with a local study. Children should work out such models as this for themselves, and *not* follow instructions. There is ample *instruction-practice* in the more formal work.

Local study work helps children with their conception of a *community*.

3. When new knowledge is presented, it should be constantly compared with knowledge already known to the child.

4. The child is much more interested in *people* and their doings than in geographical facts.

5. His comprehension of *distances* and *maps* is very uncertain and limited—far more limited than we think.

OUR AIMS

With these things in mind, let's try to define what we can hope to achieve in the Primary School.

Perhaps we can bring home to the child the following:

1. *An awareness of THINGS near by*

We should encourage him to look with curiosity at the roads and factories, farms and fields, rivers and hills around him.

2. *An interest in HAPPENINGS near by*

He should begin to wonder *why* lorries carry sugar-beet, *why* trains go roaring along, *why* farmers sow wheat, *why* pithead wheels whirr round.

3. *An interest in PEOPLE near by*

He should begin to see that people are continually at work in the world, and to inquire into some of their activities.

4. *Some knowledge of things, happenings, and people IN OTHER COUNTRIES*

Working from his knowledge of the locality, he can begin to look elsewhere, and compare conditions in other lands with conditions known to him.

5. *The realisation that his own little world is merely part of a greater whole.*

This is a very important aim, and one that is often forgotten, since the 'greater whole' is often talked about as if it had no connection with the child's own world.

MAKING GEOGRAPHY REAL

Now not one of the above aims can be achieved solely through the use of many of the text-books which are found in schools to-day. There are signs of a more realistic trend, but take a look at *your* text-books, and ask yourself how successfully they achieve any of the above things.

Thus—though I know it means more work!—it is necessary to plan other activities under the Geography label, beside reading Chapter So-and-So in the text-book.

Here, then, are some suggested ways in which Geography can become real to a child:

1. Letter-writing

I mentioned this elsewhere as an excellent form of composition, and it is an equally valuable means of making other places and people come alive.

You are sure to know teachers in various parts of the country. Have you ever suggested that *your* children write to *their* children? I don't care whether you call it Composition, Handwriting, or Geography, but let the children tell each other about themselves, their homes, friends, and environment.

This correspondence can go on for a long period, and be combined with local study on both sides. It can result in a great improvement in handwriting, written expression, local knowledge, and knowledge of a more distant community. And its great asset is that it has a definite *purpose*.

Write abroad, too. Through shipping firms, advertisements, or friends, find ships, individuals, or schools in other parts of the world, and let your children write to them. I shall never forget the intense interest of some children I knew when they received letters, pictures, scrap-books, and local information from Winnipeg and Durban. I believe that they really recognised the existence of these places for the first time as a result.

2. Models

The making of models is a well-known and often-scorned way of bringing things to life. It is scorned because of the artificiality of much teacher-dictated model-making which has gone on in the past, and for the fantastic exhibition work which has sometimes been produced.

I would say one thing about models. And it is: *Don't force the children to make them to order.* They should have had plenty of practice in measuring, cutting, etc., in more formal Handwork lessons. For a change, to follow up Geography and History, let them *create* models.

Take a Zulu village. You'll have talked about it, and compared the people, their homes, habits, and surroundings with those known to your children. And they'll want to *make* the village. Make it *their* problem, then. Ask them what things are needed in the village (revision!), who's going to make each, and *how they are going to be made.*

The children themselves will suggest paper, Plasticine, card, matchsticks, twigs, cotton-wool, raffia, and lots of similar material which they can bring from home and make into the most realistic Zulu village imaginable (or any other model, for that matter!). You notice how little *you* will be called upon to provide. You will lay on paste, paint, and guidance. And be blowed to the scale-drawings!

3. Charts

Charts are another natural way of portraying almost any Geography study. They can be made up from drawings, pictures, and written work, and mounted on large sheets of brown paper brought by the children. They'll be crude and crooked, but it doesn't matter. A 'Trip Round the World' or 'A Look at New York' on the classroom wall is far more realistic than cold words in a book. But let it be a composite effort by the children, and not something pretty of yours.

A useful alternative is to bind in book form the class's work on a topic. This is particularly appropriate to a local study: call it a 'Guide to ——'.

4. Collections

Remember what a habit with children this is? And there are many opportunities in Geography for collecting things.

Shop-packets, tins, and labels from other towns and countries; stamps and postmarks; bits of coal, wool, cotton, rubber, etc.; advertisements; corn, potatoes, and other crops; these examples should lead you to further ideas for class collections resulting from Geography lessons. Here are real things, produced by real people in places which really exist.

5. Outside Journeys

Taking a class out of school is less trouble officially than it used to be, but it is, if possible, even more trouble from the organisation point of view, since classes are often larger than ever.

The value of going and looking at a stretch of countryside, a farm, a factory, a railway station, etc., is so great, however, that the journey is worth an effort. If at all possible, two teachers are best for a large class, particularly in a town, and if there is a spare teacher in the school this could easily be arranged. Otherwise a form of lease-lend should be worked out, classes in school being temporarily doubled to free a teacher. Or a head without a class can often arrange the timetable so that two teachers are free to accompany a class on a journey.

In the country the problem of numbers is less severe, nor is there often the amount of traffic to contend with. Yet many country schools are even slower than town schools to take the children out!

Your planning should be carefully worked out, and at all costs you should avoid those queer so-called 'school journeys' which are little more than 'beanos' at the Zoo or somewhere.

Each child should have a definite aim in mind, and a notebook in which to record his findings. It is usually possible to arrange for 'finding-out' in groups, with a leader for each group. On a farm visit, for example, one group may set out to discover facts about the *animals*, another deal with the *poultry*, another with the *farm buildings*, another with the *crops*, another with the *machinery*, and so on.

Thorough preparations should always be made during preliminary lessons, so that the children already have a general idea of what they are going to see. They should discuss how each group is going to present its findings. Who is going to write? Who is going to draw? Who is going to make a model? Who is going to write a short play? Shall we make a booklet or a wall-chart? Will we be able to get somebody to come to school and give a further talk?

Organise the visit, then. Arrange times, etc., with the people concerned. Lay on your buses if necessary. Fulfil any local regulations about school journeys. Work out your marshalling system—and go!

And then follow up the visit. Often follow-up work can go on for some weeks, in several subjects, as the children complete their particular branches of work, and as you give lessons connected with the visit, and widen the study to other—non-local—fields.

6. Broadcasts

In spite of constant reminders, there's a very unfortunate habit in schools of using the wireless set to give the teacher a rest. Except for rare broadcasts which are intended to be experiences in themselves, the B.B.C. Schools Broadcasts are *not* devised to replace the teacher.

Their purpose is to supplement your work in various ways, and in the case of Geography the broadcasts often consist of imaginary visits to other countries. They should not be used as isolated episodes, but either woven into a general scheme or prepared for and followed up each week.

Your job is to provide reference books and pictures, to revise the broadcast facts and elucidate points not clear, and to draw from the children activities which will help the country concerned to come alive.

The broadcasts help you surprisingly, when you remember that they use only *sound*. By means of effects and first-hand descriptions, they transport the children most effectively to the place chosen as a subject.

But *you* must consolidate the experience.

7. Looking at Pictures

I suppose pictures now fall into the highfalutin category of 'visual aids', but you know well their value. In Geography above all subjects there is a wide choice of pictorial matter to take the child to see other children, other people, other places.

Pictorial Education provides you with a constant supply, but you should also be continually snipping pictures from magazines and newspapers, and obtaining them from various firms, the G.P.O., etc. Keep them in some sort of logical collection, rather than in a higgledy-piggledy pile. 'Continent-files' are perhaps best, with a separate folder for the British Isles, so that you can quickly turn up the ones you need.

Here are a few things worth remembering about pictures:

(*a*) Don't waste a lot of time showing small ones around the class. Let them be seen before and after, or use large ones.

(*b*) Change wall-pictures frequently.

(*c*) Make some arrangement for children to examine them. What is the use of having pictures up if there is no time when children are permitted to examine them closely?

(*d*) Arrange collections in a pleasing fashion, keeping different topics separate from each other.

(*e*) The younger the child, the brighter and simpler the picture should be.

But perhaps the most important thing about pictures is: *Encourage the children to bring them.*

I must say a word about *projected* pictures, though you may not be within touching distance of a film- or film-strip projector.

I feel the film in particular *could* be extremely useful in Geography, but there are very few films simple enough for Primary children. The action is too fast, and there is too much material packed into most films. Beware, then, of so-called 'Primary' films. But avoid even more strongly the absurd arrangements which sends films touring round schools—films which have no connection with any work you happen to be doing, whose titles you rarely know until they arrive, and which tend to be regarded as a weekly free show, immediately forgotten. If you can't see or choose your films, don't have any. And show at least twice those you *do* have.

Film-strips are of much more use, since you can control both the number of pictures shown and the length of viewing. But *do* control both these. A full strip is far too much for one lesson. Regard a strip as merely a pocket collection of useful large pictures. You would never dream of examining twenty or thirty large pictures in one lesson, yet I have seen twenty or thirty frames of a film-strip shown in a lesson. It was, of course, a sheer waste of time, since the only result was visual indigestion.

8. Visitors

You may have read *Actuality in School*, by Cons and Fletcher—a most stimulating book which describes how local workmen were invited into a Primary class to discuss their work.

Here is another activity for you—for children are fascinated by these visits, and you'll be lucky if you can smuggle your visitor out.

Obviously, foreigners would be the most interesting people, but you can often find children's parents who have travelled abroad. And don't forget farmers, postmen, lorry drivers, etc.

9. Local Observations and Records

Remembering that Geography is all around, there is always opportunity to record it in progress. Do you do local maps, observation of crops, traffic census, weather records, as well as descriptions of your local visits?

This, of course, is closely bound up with the local study work which I mention in many places in this book.

GEOGRAPHY SCHEMES

Now, what sort of line are you going to take when you draw up your schemes under the label of Geography (if you *must* have a separate label!)?

The important thing is to approach all new knowledge through some link in which the children are interested. And as I've suggested before, they are interested in themselves, the people and things they come across, and the journeys they make. I believe that all Primary Geography schemes should start from these interests.

Here, then, are some 'themes for schemes':

1. 'Children'

For younger juniors this is an excellent link through which they can get to know other parts of Britain and the world. They are in immediate sympathy with other children. They are eager to know whether those children live the same lives as they do, whether they have the same homes, clothes, food, games, and schools.

I feel that such 'Children of other lands' schemes should deal only with these ordinary things of life. To try to force into them geography of the old-fashioned type is fatal. Each child should be introduced in story form, as a real person living in a real place, and your children should be encouraged to put themselves in that place, to dramatise the story, model the clothes, homes, and village, draw and write about these other children and, where feasible, write letters to real children living in the area concerned.

Beware, however, of always choosing 'unusual' children. Why should your children be taught to think that the rest of the world is populated entirely by Eskimos, Red Indians, Zulus, and Australian aborigines?

Remember children in other areas of Britain—coal-mining and industrial towns, seaside towns and rural villages. Remember American, French, South African, and Australian children. And when you choose your text and reference books, look for those which deal with such children and their normal lives.

2. 'Men at Work'

Your children's fathers go to work, and your children use up much of their curiosity watching other men cutting up meat, driving trains, digging holes in the ground.

A useful geographical approach, then, is through 'The world's workers'. Here you can deal with your lumberjacks and cowboys, your cotton-growers and orange-pickers, comparing their jobs all the time with the jobs going on around the children.

First, though, you should have dealt with local workers, possibly in a local study. Children can realise in a small way that there are many jobs in a community: making things, growing things, selling things, and carrying out public services. They can then look at other people at work in Britain: the farmer, the factory worker, the miner, the shipbuilder, the shepherd, the fisherman.

Study of workers in other lands, with their jobs, homes, and environment, will then follow naturally; or a useful in-between stage is to look at the 'familiar' workers (postmen, engine-drivers, farmers, etc.) as they exist in other countries.

Again, happily, there are a number of appropriate textbooks available.

3. 'Things I Know'

Older children are quite ready to study the 'things' around them: their food and clothes, the coal on the fire, the rubber tyres on their bicycles, the trains and aircraft passing by.

Where do all these things come from? Who grows them or makes them, and what are their uses?

Food and clothing in particular provide many realistic pieces of learning. Tracing *cotton* or *imported meat*, for example, involves long and fascinating journeys covering a wide field.

Larger themes on these lines are 'The breakfast table', 'Homes in other lands', 'From the sheep's back to ours', etc.

Many of these, of course, involve far more than Geography, which is a very good thing—so long as you *allow* them to overflow the Geography lesson.

4. 'Let's Go Somewhere'

Children who are used to going out of school, and even those who aren't, can take imaginary journeys about the world. This is a much happier way of bringing other countries to life than the obsolete 'chunks of space' method, which moved laboriously from continent to continent over the years.

Through a series of 'journeys', children can start on their own doorstep, make their way to a port, and sail off to cross Canada; or they can fly to Australia, or trek overland to Cape Town.

But first, again, they should 'visit' London, look at the Outer Hebrides, cross over to Ireland, and so on, as training for the longer 'journeys'.

Diaries can be kept, and wall-charts, scrap-books, and maps compiled. The difficulty is that this type of live Geography is not often the subject of text-books, except for a few which tend to be too geographical about it.

5. 'Looking Around'

I've mentioned all along that Geography (and everything else) should arise from the children's familiar surroundings. Few Primary Schools, however, seem to devote time purely to the study of those surroundings—'Local Studies'.

Such study is well worth while, and the results are likely to remain in the children's minds much longer than more remote material. Pause for a moment and look around *your* school. Surely there are interesting places and occupations near by, from the normal ones to the rarer china-clay mines, oil wells (yes, in England!), salt mines, and so on.

Why not devote a term to your own area, in Geography, History, Nature Study, English, and anything else appropriate? You'll have the help of parents and others—and you might even get interested yourself!

MAP-MAKING

Finally, what about the business of maps? I have very strong feelings that the Primary child isn't as capable of *understanding* maps as he is commonly expected to be. He'll learn the name of the 'shape' all right, but does it *mean* anything to him?

I may be wrong, of course—test *your* children and see—but at least I must stress how vital it is to approach map-study, map-knowledge, and map-making in carefully graded steps.

These steps, *spread over the four Primary years*, might be as follows:

1. '*My Classroom and Home*'

Simple plans of the child's classroom and home, as 'seen by a fly on the ceiling', help to fix the 'map' idea, and can be quite exciting to make. They should start from overhead views of small objects, and work up to scale plans on squared paper.

2. *School and Street*

Plans of the school and playground, and a familiar street with a few places marked, follow next. There should be no insistence on exact scale, for this is quite difficult, but children can discuss proportionate sizes.

3. *Short Journeys*

'From home to school', 'From school to park', etc., can be shown in map form, again with known places marked.

4. *Local Maps*

Plans of the town or village can then be produced and compared with the Ordnance Survey ones. Children will look at these latter for hours. One-inch maps will bring in the idea of *symbols*, because of the impossibility of showing large areas in exact detail.

5. *The British Isles*

This is the hardest step, but if previous steps have been slow and thorough, children should be ready to see the logical representation of even larger areas than those known to them.

All this map-work is, of course, interspersed with other types of Geography and topics, and connected with them all the time.

I have been able to give only the bare framework of development above, and you will, of course, fill in a great amount of detail.

. . . . .

Well, I must make an end to my remarks about Geography. May I repeat, though, just four things:

1. Geography can never be fully divorced from other subjects.
2. Geography can never be 'geographical' to the Primary School child.
3. Geography must start from what the child already knows.
4. Therefore, *take things slowly*, and *keep them always real.*

CHAPTER XII

THE SUBJECT CALLED HISTORY

Now we turn to that part of the child's world which adults and tradition have labelled History.

I suppose it appears logical enough to 'chop off' this aspect of things and put it into a separate compartment. It's so convenient to look at the past on its own, in a nice tidy order, until we come to the present, which, of course, is another matter.

Or *is* it so logical and convenient?

I suggest that even adults now admit that you can't divorce the past from the present, and many of them even admit that the old idea of taking History from the year dot up to the year now is not only boring but extremely confusing.

We're not much interested in adults here, though, so let's look at two reasons why History can't stay on its own with the Primary School child.

1. *His sense of TIME is almost non-existent*

If you've never discovered the truth of this, ask the child a few questions. Ask him if his grandmother ever knew Sir Walter Raleigh, what Adam said to St. Paul, and if Napoleon ever met Julius Caesar. Children live so much for to-day that most things more than a year or so old are just lumped together.

2. *The child is a realist*

I've stressed over and over again how important to the child are the things that he sees and hears and feels and *experiences*—the things which are going on around him. How then can you talk to him about the past as a thing on its own? It *must* be linked with the present, and it must be so linked *all the time.*

There are two things about History, though, which cannot be lightly dismissed because of the time element or the lack of personal experience on the part of the child. And they are:

1. Its *excitement.*
2. Its *literature.*

There is no doubt that many stories from British and world history are more stirring than any fiction, more thrilling than any comic. For that reason alone they deserve to be known by the child, without the need for any strict attempt to fit them into their proper time order. But when their place in our literature and heritage is considered, their claim to a share in the syllabus is strong.

The situation therefore seems to be:

Children deserve to learn much which may be called History, but they are not capable of learning it in a 'historical' way.

The latter part of the above statement does not apply fully to older Primary children. Some of them are able to understand *very simple* cause and effect, and the development of everyday things well known to them. But in general, History, as the adult understands it, has no place in the Primary School.

Well, how does the above fit in with *your* syllabus? What sort of History (if you still retain the label) do you take with your children?

And while I'm asking questions, let me put a few more about points that I'll be dealing with later:

1. Are you tied down to a text-book?
2. Do you use your locality?

3. How much 'finding-out' do the children do?
4. Do you teach lots of dates?
5. Do you do the wall charts and picture displays *yourself*?
6. How often and how closely do you refer to things known to the children?
7. How often do you 'overflow' your History into Handwork, Art, Geography, English?
8. Do the children (*a*) act, (*b*), make things, (*c*) draw things, (*d*) talk, (*e*) see pictures, (*f*) listen to broadcasts, (*g*) write, (*h*) visit places—in connection with History? Or do they just listen to you and read their books?

Now be honest about your answers. For I shall suggest that the common methods of text-book, note-making, and time-chart are dreary and unproductive.

THE DIFFICULTY OF 'TIME'

First, though, I must say something about the child's idea of Time, for I've already hinted that chronological teaching of History (i.e. Britons, Romans, Saxons, Normans, etc.) is basically meaningless to him.

You must, however, make a start on helping him towards some idea of progress in years, and this can be quite exciting if you clear your mind of the old time-chart idea. A rational approach could be something on the following lines:

1. *'Now' and 'Then'*

With younger children you can do little more than talk about 'now' and 'then'. They are very full of 'now', but find it interesting to think that there was also a 'then'!

Pictures form the most useful link. You know how amused children are at the sight of frock-coats and togas and stage-coaches and Viking ships. Let them see as many pictures as possible, so that they can contrast, in discussion and in their minds, their own dress and houses and transport and habits with those of the past.

Some seven-year-olds have their whole History scheme built up on such contrasts, but as I shall show later I think that such work is more appropriate at a later age, in the shape of coherent 'development' studies. But with younger children, whatever the general scheme, you should begin a regular contrast with 'now'.

2. *The first 'charts'*

Eight- and nine-year-olds can play with little 'time-charts' (no, not *that* sort!). The first one could be 'A day in my life', which would often include what happened in school. They can make it in picture form, or with short sentences. A *class* 'Day' looks attractive on the wall, and a number of children can work together on it.

Later this idea can be extended to show a week, and nine-year-olds can make—*and* understand—a year, and charts of their own lives.

The method of making these can be left to the children. They may draw, paint, stick on photographs and cuttings, and of course write. They will use colour and similar ways of showing the time-periods.

3. *'Bridging the gap'*

So far, you notice, I've not mentioned any sort of time-knowledge outside the child's own experience, and the bridging of the gap between his own life and events before he was born is our biggest problem.

The most obvious aids, of course, are things and people known to him. When were his father and mother born? When was his house built? When were the pennies in his pocket made?

Such questions, and observations of dates on buildings, statues, tombstones, and so on, go a long way towards bridging this gap. Dates thus discovered can be entered on a chart, with illustrations and the passing years marked out. We are then getting nearer to a time-chart proper, but what a difference in the child's understanding of it!

4. *Progress charts*

The type of chart comparable with the long traditional type, yet of interest to Juniors, is the 'progress chart'. This can be built up by nine- and ten-year-olds whose History scheme consists of fascinating 'lines of development' (of which more later). If they have studied, say, Dress, Food, and Houses, they will have made charts in each case. When these charts are put alongside each other, children can see at a glance the types of dress, food, and houses appropriate to various periods of History. They can thus begin to know something, in a simple way, of the Romans, Saxons, Normans, and so on, right up to now. Their knowledge will have arisen from personal interests, and will be summarised in quite an elaborate composite time-chart.

But please spare the child the beautiful string of inert dates, which starts in the air at 500 B.C., and peters out, still in the air, around 1485!

HISTORY SCHEMES

Now let's look at some types of approach—schemes, if you like—which take into consideration the child's limitations, the excitements and heritage of History, and the importance and interest of the child's everyday life.

1. Legends and Stories

The younger children should certainly learn History as 'English'. To them there is no difference between Red Riding Hood and Boadicea, except that they obviously weren't brought up in the same way, and some peculiar adults pretend that one was real and one wasn't!

Thus there is no need to perspire over making sure that your History stories are true—at least for seven-year-olds. It just doesn't matter. Bring in Ulysses and Robert Bruce, Jason and Marco Polo. They'll all join the Christmas pudding mixture of fairy tales and truth which naturally fills the mind of a child of this age.

There's strong meat in these legends and stories, so please don't just read them and make notes. Talk about them, act them, draw them, live them, enjoy them. Forget that the time may be labelled History.

Here are examples of such stories:

Stories from the Bible;
Stories from Greece and Rome (Romulus and Remus, the geese, Ulysses, Jason, the Trojan Horse, etc.);
Stories from Egypt;
Stories of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table;
The adventures of the Crusaders;
Stories of the pilgrims;
The Northern Sagas;
Beowulf, Marco Polo, St. Francis, Roland and Oliver, etc.

I would add another type to these, at least for the second-year Juniors. And that is the type which takes an imaginary boy (or girl) from some period of our history, gives him a name, and provides him with exciting adventures. Such tales, if well done, can satisfy the story desires of the children while ingeniously giving them quite a useful amount of 'local colour'. They discover in passing the sort of surroundings in which people of different periods lived.

Telling the Story

Perhaps it's a bit cruel to remind you that *the way the story is told* is important. But I want to stress this, for I still feel that many teachers tend to be self-conscious with Primary children. I know you may look a fool to adults, but children will hang on to your words if you throw yourself into the thing.

So even if you're reading the story, let your hair down and *live* it! Use your voice, quietly at tense moments, excitedly when things are warming up, and clearly all the time. But by 'clearly' I don't mean the well-known 'teacher's trumpet'. You're not talking to the Outer Hebrides, but (I hope) to a tense group of children gathered round you.

Use your body, too. Facial expression, movement, gesture—all these help to make a story real. And *please* let the children use *their* bodies with you. Let them ride horses and crack whips and draw swords and row boats as the story goes on.

Does that bring a picture of chaos to your mind? It shows you've never tried it, then! Children can express their emotions through their bodies, hands, faces, and eyes with perfect control and discipline, *if they're encouraged and allowed to.* And when the story is told, you have a natural incentive to dramatise it.

2. Famous People

Another interesting scheme for younger children is one based on famous lives. Here again the approach is through story, and little attempt should be made to turn the stories into History. If you use legends and general stories with the seven-year-olds, however, your biographical scheme for the eight-year-olds should deal with *real* people, and they could be taken in chronological order through the year.

Vigorous stories should be chosen, to appeal to the child's liking for heroes; but of course this doesn't necessarily restrict you to warlike characters.

Although you are not teaching History you'll find that each character dealt with does in fact bring with him many incidental details about the times in which he lived. Thus the child is unconsciously beginning to store up historical details which will be of use later on. But your approach should be dramatic, dealing with the person for his own sake, as an enjoyable experience for the child.

People you might deal with:

Julius Caesar, Boadicea, St. Augustine, Alfred the Great, Harold, William the Conqueror, Thomas à Becket, the Black Prince, Drake, Clive, Nelson, Scott, Florence Nightingale, etc.

3. Lines of Development

When children are nine or ten we begin to wonder if we can help them to see the progress of civilisation in some simple way. For many years thoughtful teachers believed that it wasn't possible because of the tangled web, while others went happily along ladling out great indigestible slabs of Plantagenets and Tudors.

Recently a very sensible compromise has come to the fore. It recognises the complication of progress *generally*, but takes some *particular* aspect of the child's experience and traces its development over the years. Thus cumbersome 'slab' history is eliminated, the child's own experience is utilised, yet a simple view is taken over quite a long period of time.

Take 'Wheels'. What can be more fascinating than the development of the wheel from the first rolling log? Yet in hearing about this development much is learnt about the people of the various periods, and a simple progress chart can be made, as previously suggested.

The only difficulty lies in your own sources of information. For although this idea isn't new there are still very few books available on such topics.

Much of your solution is in throwing initiative on the children. Let *them* find out about early ploughs, books, beds, or whatever you're studying. But you will also have to do much research yourself.

Take your choice from these topics:

Large-scale: Houses, Ships, Wheels, Roads, Furniture, Clothes, Food.
Smaller-scale: Beds, Building Materials, Printing, Toys, Schools, Hats, Aeroplanes, Railways, Ploughs, Carts, Shops, etc.—according to your locality.

Many of these, of course, can form themes for wider topic work, and you will see in any case the Art, Craft, English, and Geography which obviously arise from them.

I commend most strongly to you this method of skimming over the years. For skimming *must* be done with Primary children; any deeper study is beyond their understanding.

4. Local Study

At the age of nine or ten, children should be able to look into the life of a community with intelligence and some understanding. Traditional History took the *nation* as the community to be studied. How on earth a Primary child, living in the small circle of his world, was expected to *understand* a nation in the first place didn't seem to enter anybody's head.

Now we are more reasonable. We realise that a study of his own small environment is the obvious preliminary to the study of wider things. I've already said something about this under the label of Geography, but the historical angle of a village or town is quite as interesting (and anyhow, as I've said long before, how can you possible separate the two?).

Let the children find out the history of *their* village or town, then. Go and see people who know about it; get books, if any; visit buildings and borrow parish records; and let the children make their own 'History of ——'. Let them make a pageant, a 'museum', a chart, or some such climax to the work.

And again, of course, you have many other subjects coming into the study.

BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE

Well, those are four forms of History schemes, but whatever you think about the meaning of History, about syllabuses, or about the impossibility of keeping the subject in a separate compartment, you're bound to be thinking all the time about *methods* of teaching; or, as I've preferred to put it all along, methods of *learning* for the child.

History, more than any other subject, tends to be taught in one way only—and I've said *this* before, too! Yes, it's the traditional text-book and note-book subject, and even the note-books are all exactly alike.

Well, let's see what else might be happening in your classroom during the times labelled History.

1. Dramatisation

I've mentioned this among the basic subjects as a method of speech-training. But, of course, it has wider values too; among them are confidence, fluency, and the enjoyment and memorising of lively incidents. History is full of such happenings, and while their spontaneous dramatisation is likely to be historically inaccurate, at least the bones of the occurrence will be fixed in the child's mind in a most pleasant fashion.

Don't, I beg of you, use ready-made plays in books, at least with the younger classes. They're stilted, they're not in the child's language, and in any case the mechanics of reading take away the enjoyment. Tell the story (or let the children read), and *then* discuss a play based on it.

"Who's going to be Alfred? Who's going to be the lady? Who's going to be the cakes? Let's have several Alfreds (etc.) and see which group does it best! Now gather round each other, and talk about what you're going to *do*, what you're to *say*, and what *things* you'll need."

Children will improvise 'props', and if they're given a day or two to think about them they'll provide some surprisingly effective ones. Their speeches will often be crude, and certainly of a low standard, while they will be at their best in battles and such-like vigorous actions, but imperceptibly the speech will improve and the action become more restrained. And, of course, you have the asset of co-operation in groups, and the value of giving children initiative.

When each group performs, *don't interrupt them*. I know how very tempting it is, but what criticism is needed can be done afterwards, and even then not in a destructive fashion. And if you persevere with this you'll have children producing plays entirely of their own accord as a surprise for you! Older ones will write out the speeches they have made up, and even write their own play-book. But, of course, that's not History —is it?

2. Going Out

I've already stressed the value of local study work, and this means going out of school. The organisation of outside visits is very easy in rural schools, but not so easy in a town. I discussed this problem under the Geography label, however, so if you look back at that, and at what I said on subject-matter earlier in this chapter, I won't have to repeat myself here.

I will say, though, that if you haven't yet done any study of your own town or village, you are missing a first-hand interest, not to mention a great necessity, in the lives of your children. For this in particular is a certain way of showing children that *History has something to do with them.* Do *your* children realise this? If they are brought up on text-books they certainly don't!

Take them out and prove it to them, then. I know that the decision to go out and explore seems, for some reason, a difficult one for many teachers to make, but it is one which should be made at some time or other in every classroom.

3. Looking at Pictures

Here again I have mentioned this at some length in connection with Geography, so perhaps you'd like to look back at my remarks there, both concerning ordinary pictures and also in regard to projected pictures.

As far as History goes, there are naturally far fewer pictures available, and virtually no films (which is perhaps as well!). What pictures there are, whether printed on paper or condensed on film-strip, consist mainly of the following:

(*a*) Photographs taken since the invention of photography;
(*b*) Photographs of older buildings still standing;
(*c*) Photographs of material in museums;
(*d*) Reproductions of old prints or engravings;
(*e*) First-hand drawings of actual buildings or museum material;
(*f*) Reconstructions, from old prints, written descriptions, and the artist's imagination;
(*g*) Purely imaginative drawings of events or objects from the past.

The last two types are sometimes of doubtful value, and the last one should only be used if nothing more authentic is available.

You haven't as many sources for pictures as with Geography, but *Pictorial Education*, the museums, Woolworth's booklets, and History reference books (especially those by the Quennells) can supply you between them with a fair range.

4. Models, Charts, and Collections

As with Geography, History can be brought home in a realistic way by the making of individual, group, or class models, etc. This can be done in 'creative' Handwork time, after a start in History time.

The children should be allowed to work out their own plans, methods, and materials, while you act as guide and adviser. They will work from pictures and from descriptions which they have heard or read, or in the case of local models, from first-hand observation.

Charts, some of which I talked about in connection with 'Time', should be planned, labelled, and made up by the children. They will draw crude pictures, stick others on crookedly, make spelling mistakes, and drop blots, but the result will be *theirs*, and the improvement in the next one will show how self-critical they are.

Collections of pictures and cuttings can be made in the same way as in Geography. Some areas are rich in fossils, especially where there are quarries, gravel-pits, and open-cast coal-mining. If you're near chalk downs, too, you have a fruitful field.

5. Looking at Books

A set of text-books for a class used to be considered a necessity. Nowadays the wise teacher still buys the books, but makes sure *they're all different* (like children), and puts them in a child-arranged reference library.

This arrangement throws the initial lesson on a topic more on to the teacher, but ensures that the follow-up work is done by the children. It also allows of much assignment work. "This group find out about Roman roads, this group about Roman houses," etc.

6. Keeping Note-books

Traditionally, children have note-books for this subject. All right, but what do they put in them? *Your* notes and sketches?

Rather a waste of time, isn't it, when duplicating machines are so efficient?

The younger children will naturally need help with their first notes. But even if they copy from the board at first, *they* should provide what is written on the board! The notes should be built up by them through questioning, and written up by you.

Later, those who wish can add to the communal notes, and at times you can give them the first sentence only.

Bright eight-year-olds and most children of nine and ten can make their own notes and sketches, and collect pictures and cuttings on various topics which they may be studying.

. . . . .

Well, that's all I have to say about History (perish the label!). Perhaps the questions which I asked you at the beginning of the chapter ought to have been here at the end. But if you can find them, look at them again. Meanwhile, you might start by tearing up that beautiful, useless time-chart!

CHAPTER XIII

THE SUBJECT CALLED NATURE STUDY

FROM among the many things which make up the child's world, I have now dealt with the aspects which adults call Geography and History.

Very closely allied to Geography, even to the adult, is the subject normally referred to as Nature Study. With older children it inclines more towards their subject called Science, but in the Primary School it deals mainly with living and growing things. Or at least it *should* do, for few things attract young children more than animals, and—with help from you—plants.

Strictly speaking, I suppose, this study should also include soil, climate, rocks, and so on, but have *you* ever tried Geology when there are silkworms to be watched?

'NATURE' AND THE CHILD

As with all subjects, then, our first effort must be to try to see Nature Study *as the child sees it.* For he sees it every day, whether he lives in a slum or a village.

But first of all, try a little exercise on yourself. Look around you *now*. What can you see?

A Bird on a telegraph wire?

What sort is it? Why is it there? Do you know what its eggs are like? Where and how does it build its nest? Does it stay in this country all winter?

A Spider in the Corner?

Why is it there? Has it a web? Could you draw its web from memory? How does it weave it? Why does it weave it? Does it ever catch anything? What does it catch?

A Bulb peeping from the Fibre in a Bowl?

What sort is it? What colour will the flower be? How did you persuade it to grow? Will you be able to get seeds from the flower? If not, will its life be over?

Well, those were things which *you* might see at this moment. And one day when you've a few minutes to spare—if ever!—you might like to sit down and list all the things of Nature which you can see from where you are sitting. You'll be sitting *on* some for a start, dressed in others, and writing on something else, before you even commence to look for things which are still alive or moving.

Now all these spiders and bulbs and flowers and goldfish and pigs and trees are there in front of the children too. In fact, many adults are so blind and blasé about the things around them that children can beat them hollow at observation. (No, of *course* I don't mean you! But have a competition one day!)

The great difference between you and the children is that you are capable of reasoning things out about what you see—even if you don't always do it. You could ask yourself and answer the sort of questions I've listed above, in connection with the bird, the spider, and the bulb. But the child tends to go little further than *observation*, and exclamations about what he observes.

This difference between the observant child and the thinking teacher may well be the very essence of what the school calls Nature Study. In other words, we must help the child to *do something about what he sees.*

I've taken some time to make this point, because it's important. In school upon school the children do one of two things:

Either (1) They bring endless specimens to a beautiful nature table, and do nothing about them.

Or (2) They draw leaves and flowers and tadpoles by the dozen, with many notes, but rarely make contact with real ones.

Now surely *both* activities are essential to each other. The child should bring what he sees, *and* learn something about it. And this, many people will be horrified to realise, means that the syllabus will be impossible to prepare.

There's no point in reading further if you're a syllabus-fiend, is there? But if you're interested in helping children with Nature, this implication may intrigue you.

Your Nature Study lessons, in other words, should be largely a sort of 'In Town To-night', in which topical items are studied or discussed.

This isn't as terrifying as it sounds, for there are always the old-stagers, such as seed dispersal, tadpoles, Jack Frost and Company, which turn up at reasonably predictable times, and can thus be prepared for.

But I *do* ask you to allow the children to run the syllabus to a great extent. They will feel that Nature Study is in fact a study of Nature, as they see it on all sides every day. And children who know that their discoveries will be regarded seriously, and used, become children who look *into* things rather than merely looking *at* them. They will follow up their observations, make new discoveries, keep records, and gain a *knowledge* of Nature, rather than a superficial acquaintance with it. Their 'lessons' will be linked with their daily experience.

Can you say that of all *your* lessons?

'NATURE' ACTIVITIES

Now, what sort of activities can go on, over and above ordinary lessons, to help with this linking?

First and foremost, I must stress a very simple thing which appears surprisingly rarely. I've mentioned it before, but here it is again:

1. 'Nature Corner'

Your classroom should have a permanent ever-changing 'Nature Corner' in it.

How obvious this is, and how necessary! Since Nature 'goes on' all the time, it is absurd to confine it to an odd lesson or two, and then ignore it.

Your Nature Corner may be a table, if you're lucky. But at least you can find a shelf, a window-ledge, or a few sheets of specimens pinned to a wall. The best idea I've ever seen for a crowded room was a collection of test-tubes, strapped to a sheet of paper with adhesive tape. The sheet was pinned up, and a large number of plants, buds, flowers, etc., could be kept in water without taking up any shelf or table space.

Besides plants, buds, and flowers, you will want to encourage the children to bring tree-leaves, bark, seeds, soils, pebbles, and of course worms, caterpillars, silkworms, frog-spawn, and fish, to inhabit Nature Corner at different times.

Children will keep things tidy and labelled. And if you happen to live in the country, don't think that this idea is unnecessary. Curiously enough, I've found that many country children know hardly anything about the growing things, in particular, which they pass every day.

2. Nature Diaries

Another way of 'keeping Nature going' is by keeping a diary, either by each child or as a class.

Large sheets of brown paper or sugar paper can be used for the class diary, and observations, or flat specimens, can be put on them by as many children as possible. A little witchery with a broomstick can turn these sheets into a continually growing record, using a new sheet each week or each month, and hanging them on a piece of the broomhandle.

Nine- and ten-year-olds can keep personal books, designed and made by themselves. Sometimes they may want to put notes about a class discussion in their diaries, but they should *never* copy stereotyped notes from a blackboard.

Leaves and pressed flowers can go in these books, as well as pictures, drawn and collected.

3. Going Out

Above all, though, in the study of Nature, you should try to *go out*. There must be few schools without something growing or living near by. I know that so far I may appear to have talked as if you live in the middle of a wood, but even the town school may be near a park, and if you're not, you should most certainly have window-boxes, playground soil-plots, or some such way of growing things, both in and out of the school. And at least you have clouds and rain and frost and sparrows and spiders and rats and mice (and no doubt other creatures too).

Take the children out, then, if humanly possible, and look at Nature, however ruined it may be by man.

4. Growing Things

Every classroom, as I've suggested already, should contain something growing; and the school surroundings, too, should contribute plant and flower life to the child's experience.

The old jam-jar-and-blotting-paper method isn't to be despised, for it grows some quite large plants, with all their components in full view. Blotting-paper in a saucer will grow many small seeds.

Normal household plants can brighten the classroom, too, and give the children training in care and arrangement. And, of course, the growing of bulbs in bowls is an interesting activity, with winter brightness as its reward.

Ambitious classes can produce little gardens. I've even seen an indoor rock-garden complete with tiny fishpond containing guppies. Window-boxes in the school and boarded-off loads of soil in the playground are not uncommon.

The ideal, of course, is a school garden, yet I've heard it suggested that Primary children can't manage this. How absurd! They're often much keener gardeners than older children—girls and all!—and provided that their plots are small, and the soil not too heavy, their garden can be their pride.

If you're lucky enough to be able to scrounge a piece of ground, I strongly advise you to do so. And if you don't know anything about gardening yourself—well, tell the children so, and learn with them!

5. Keeping Living Things

Another obvious Nature activity is the keeping of living creatures, though it has its snags. All the same, many schools realise the child's desire to look after fish, caterpillars, silkworms, spiders, ants, worms, and even rabbits, mice, and guinea-pigs; and many of these creatures are kept at schools.

You must, of course, know what food and attention they require, and they must be kept in suitable quarters. Provided their requirements are known, the children will soon learn to look after them, and your only remaining snag is holiday-time and week-ends.

A kind caretaker might solve this problem, but we don't all have that blessing. The other—quite workable—arrangement lies with the children. If your relationship with them is right, and their attitude to living creatures is a happy one, there will be fierce competition to look after them in holiday-times. Children will volunteer to come into school, or take creatures home. (You will, of course, want to make arrangements also about the garden and the bulb-bowls.)

During school-time there should be regular feeding and cleaning duties, just as *all* school jobs should be shared out, as training in community living, initiative, and responsibility.

6. Finding Out About Things

If you're doing Nature Study in the natural way I'm suggesting, you will have children with perpetual questions in their minds. Your lessons will answer many of these, but you will want to encourage initiative in finding the answers, too.

Asking *other* people is one way which will be used. But you should provide also a number of general reference books. Many Puffin picture books are appropriate, and Step's identification books are useful, though the text is adult.

Encourage children also to bring pictures and cuttings whenever they come across them in their reading.

THE ASPECTS OF NATURE STUDY

Perhaps it would be helpful if I summarised here the different branches of Nature Study which might be studied in the ways I have described.

1. Things That Move About

In addition to animals, the child will want to know about fishes, insects, birds, reptiles, and human beings, and you should try to help him to be curious about them all.

The younger children will think most about their pets, and will want to talk about cats and dogs and canaries and parrots and rabbits and the rest.

Let them talk! Discuss habits, food, beds, shapes, and colours. Draw these creatures, collect pictures of them, write about them, and, as mentioned above, keep some of them.

Other familiar living things can also be studied. The fly, the swallow, the sparrow, spiders and beetles are seen by every child. Your job is to turn the seeing into studying.

Older children can go more deeply with their studies. They can be given problems to solve: "Find out whether fishes lay eggs". "Where do hares live?" "What do hedgehogs eat?" "Where do flies go in the winter-time?" etc.

You'll notice that I'm expanding, with older children, the field of study. The less commonly-seen creatures can be introduced, but you will need pictures to make up for the lack of real specimens.

By the time a child is eleven, he should have some knowledge of most reasonably common British creatures: e.g. gulls, foxes, owls, badgers, eels, ants, worms, stoats, crows, etc. He should, too, know a little about his own body, and how to look after it.

Do you remember *that* aspect of Nature Study?

2. Things that Grow in the Ground

Obviously trees, plants, and flowers cannot be studied in the manner of the scientist, but the child's familiarity with them can be turned into a simple curiosity about their growth.

What are the roots for? What are the flowers for? How do they sow their seeds? How do the seeds grow?

You'll notice that this falls far short of the flower-dissection and leaf-classification of your youth. And so it should, except with very bright children who'll nose it out in any case.

Children love collecting flowers. They love collecting leaves and seeds. A little encouragement from you will have them labelling what they collect, and mounting or displaying them in some way.

Over a period of time they will be able to follow up with sketches and personal notes a particular tree or plant, as seen through the year. They can observe how flowers die, and are replaced by seeds, and then the clever ways in which those seeds are scattered. (I sometimes think that this last is the most fascinating thing in the whole of Nature!)

But don't forget those collections! It's sad to think how many lessons on trees and plants are conducted *in vacuo*. Yet most schools would have no trouble at all in collecting up winter twigs, spring buds, summer flowers, and autumn seeds.

If they're used for nothing else, they will make the place cheerful!

Posy competitions and harvest festivals can provide a particular stirring of interest at the appropriate times. And don't treat rose-hip collections, blackberry pie, and conker time as things divorced from the syllabus!

3. Earth, Air, and Water

These are not so exciting as the first two aspects mentioned, but they will be referred to in passing because they are essential to life.

Children will realise this, but simple experiments with growing things will stress the fact. Weather charts are familiar in schools, but none the less interesting, and the effect of drought, rain, sunshine, and frost on plants can also be recorded.

Older children can learn a little about different types of soil, and the need for replacing what crops take from the ground.

4. A Small Area

If you are near the countryside, or a park, it is an excellent idea to take a small section of ground and follow its life for a year. A hedgerow is an ideal spot, especially if it has an adjacent ditch.

Throughout the year you will have endless material for study. Twigs, buds, leaves, flowers, and seeds will be there, of course, and there will also be birds, insects, and small animals, and the living and growing things in the ditch. The effects of weather will be noticeable, too.

Booklets, charts, and Nature Corner, labelled 'Our Hedge', will quicken the personal interest.

Try this Nature Study 'Centre of Interest'. And if you *must* draw up a syllabus—well, put 'The ten yards of hedge and ditch running eastwards from the far corner of Farmer Jones's field'!

CHAPTER XIV

THE QUESTION OF MUSIC

I APPROACH this subject with a mixture of hesitation and confidence. With hesitation, because I can't play the piano, know little about music, and in fact can only just keep ahead of the children when it comes to technicalities. But with confidence, because I know well that many of *you* are in the same boat as myself, and I thus feel that I can write with some sympathy.

You see, it's often impossible (and perhaps even undesirable) for the Primary child to have all his music teaching from a specialist. Thus many of you find yourselves, as I originally did, faced with a class of children and a time-table labelled Music.

Well, I hope for a start that you don't spend every lesson standing children in rows and making them sing. Just as sitting in rows and doing endless sums, dictated handwork, and teacher-chosen compositions is deadening and unnatural, so, too, is the painful learning of a list of songs, phrase by phrase.

I hope, though, that you make full use of the B.B.C. 'Singing Together' series. In it you will find carefully chosen songs, taught in a lively and attractive manner. If you encourage the children to let themselves go during these broadcasts they will have a valuable experience each week. (And incidentally, you yourself will find a good few hints on the teaching of songs.) But please, please use a good set, with good volume, and let the children *sing*, not merely tremble their lips!

MUSIC ACTIVITIES

But music means much more than singing—though you wouldn't think so in many schools. I don't suggest that every teacher can be expected to deal with musical appreciation in the adult sense—and luckily this would be impossible in the Primary School, anyhow—but at least we can all use music for movement and mime, for composition, for listening and enjoyment, as well as for singing and technique-teaching purposes.

Let's look at some of these activities:

1. Movement and Mime

In poetry lessons children gain most enjoyment from *movement*—'acting' the poems, if you like. They become trees and clouds and mountains as the poem is read or said. They look out of windows, turn windmill sails, drive railway engines, or ride horses, as the case may be.

Music can give the same physical pleasure to them. They cannot always sing and move at the same time, but part of the class can mime while the others sing, or you can use gramophone records of songs.

Typical songs for this kind of enjoyment are the various sea-shanties with their 'rowing' and 'heaving' rhythms, 'countryside' songs with their trees and birds, and the merry 'narrative' songs in which the children can mime the story as the song is sung.

The classroom restricts this aspect of music, but if you can use a hall you can have enjoyable times.

For movement to music without words, you cannot do better than make use of the broadcast series, 'Music and Movement'.

2. Composition

I don't know why so few teachers encourage children to compose little tunes, and perhaps to add words to them. This, like poem-composition, is quite possible with Juniors, provided that we don't think about the results from an adult angle.

When you take your 'exercises', it is a pleasant change from modulator or staff work to suggest the writing of a short tune on the board or on paper. This will at first consist of only a few notes. Then ask for words to it. You will get suggestions such as 'We go in the yard at playtime' (to be sung down or up the scale), and 'Ring out those bells' (d, s, m, d, repeated in reverse).

Older children will develop these snatches into short verses, often with pleasing tunes. There will be no great music or great poetry, but there will be the joy of creation which is always worth while, however crude the creation may be, and whether it is composition, art, craft, poetry, or music.

There is most certainly nothing absurd or undignified about this type of work in the eyes of Primary children, however uncomfortable less lively teachers may feel about it.

3. Listening

This side of music seems to be almost non-existent. Yet without music for the children to listen to, how can we pretend to teach the subject?

You need a gramophone for this, and of course records; and ability to play the piano, or the presence of a pianist on your staff, is naturally an advantage here.

No one will ever agree as to the type of music which can be offered to Primary children, but, as with anything else, it is essential that it should be something which they spontaneously enjoy, without the necessity for forced technical interpretations by the teacher.

Such music for enjoyment (and movement as well) might include:

The Pipes of Pan;
Water Music and parts of *Messiah;*
Children's Overture (Quilter):
Nutcracker Suite;
Several works of Mendelssohn;
Selections from *Carmen* (Bizet);
Marches by Elgar, Sousa, etc.

But try the children with many things, and let them say which they like, without forcing them to say why.

4. Technique

You will need to help the children to know something of the 'handwriting' of music, and here *you* will have to set out and discover the simple facts about 'time-names' (*taa*, *tai-tai*, *ta-fa-te-fé*, etc.), time-signatures, and the modulator and staff. The last two are fairly simple to explain from the 'ups-and-downs' of any tune, but whether you will be able to progress as far as explaining different keys will depend on your own enthusiasm and knowledge.

The bare necessities of writing down a tune are quite easy, however, and all Primary children should be able to do this by the age of nine or ten.

5. Percussion and Other Bands

There are teachers who cannot stand the noise of a percussion band at any price, but there's no doubt that the *children* enjoy it. Again the technique is simple (though you need a pianist), but you may prefer the melody of recorder or bamboo pipes.

Many a non-musical teacher has taken the trouble to discover details of one of these two instruments, and has produced an 'orchestra' which is the pride of the school.

6. Song-singing

I've left this till last because it's so often the *only* music in a class, and everybody knows how to deal with it—or do they?

Do you ever talk about the words of a song beforehand, about the *mood* of the song and the rhythm of the music? Do you write the tune on the board and sing it to the children? Or do you parrot out the words like eeni-meeni-mini-mo, hammer out the tune, and go over it like the nine-times table?

Songs tell stories and have character. We tend to forget this in our so-called teaching of them. Let's give the children choice, then, and not merely work from a list; and when we teach a song, let's remember its meaning, its melody, and its mood, and thus enjoy it.

. . . . .

Musical teachers, with their violins and orchestra studies, will perhaps have shuddered at this chapter. But I know I'm with the majority—the non-musical ones who have to teach Music. And I hope that I've given them at least a few ideas for getting away from that endless hammering at songs.

CHAPTER XV

EXPRESSION THROUGH ART

I STILL see cubes and cylinders on top of cupboards, but I must admit that I haven't seen them used lately. There's one thing, though, that *does* still happen in so-called Art lessons: well-meaning teachers still insist on telling the children *how* to paint things.

Now for many years people have repeatedly shown us that *children see things differently from adults.* How, then, can we presume to tell them what they see, when *we* can't see it?

Have we the right to tell eight-year-olds that there are no 'spikes' on the sun? Should we tell seven-year-olds that people's legs don't grow at opposite corners? Are we justified in telling younger Juniors that tree-tops are much wider than tree-trunks? And who are we to tell all Juniors that the sky is never as blue as they paint it?

It doesn't even fall into the category of 'things adults know best'. Maybe we *do* know better than children what Arithmetic they should learn; maybe we *do* know how they ought to shape their handwriting; maybe we *do* know what Geography and History facts are good for them—maybe! But we certainly can't see pictures through their eyes, and thus we cannot criticise their interpretation of actual shapes.

THE ART LESSON

What *can* we do, then?

Well, our teaching should direct itself towards the 'composition' of a picture. Not *how*, but *what.*

Perhaps I can summarise the efforts necessary to this end:

1. We should be able to help our children to SEE a picture before they attempt to make it.

2. We should thus help them to see how various components can be pleasantly grouped.

3. We should help them to see the need for making the subject stand out against a less important but necessary background.

4. We should help them to know the difference between a lot of unconnected shapes scattered about a sheet and a number of shapes which belong to each other.

5. We should help them with the *mechanical* techniques of mixing colours and using a brush.

6. But we should certainly *not* lay down rules for doing faces, the sun, the sky, trees, animals, houses, perspective, and so on.

Let us concentrate on the picture or design, then. For to lay down rules about them is to produce Art as dull and monotonous as the all-familiar Handwork we see.

How does one start a picture, then? And especially, how does the non-artistic teacher deal with Art?

I believe there's no such thing as the non-artistic teacher. You don't agree? You're one? Well, tell me: *why* do you say you're not artistic? In nine cases out of ten, it's simply because you can't paint!

What does that matter? *You're* not going to paint the picture!

Now examine yourself again. Can you tell when a picture is pleasantly grouped? Can you distinguish between the subject and its background? Can you see balance in a picture? Can you close your eyes and see a picture from a welter of surrounding things? Do you know when you like a picture and when you don't?

Yes?

Then you can teach Art!

I shall be taken to task by highly qualified Art teachers who have spent years learning their job—'The blind leading the blind', and all that—but I'm talking about the teaching of your Primary children; and I say that the teacher who is not an artist can still produce excellent results if he'll only refrain from constantly telling the children *how* to paint.

Starting a Picture

The important part of the Art lesson is the *introduction*. The 'inspiration', we ought to call it.

What are your 'inspirations' like? "Here's a piece of paper: draw me 'Washing Day' "? Or do you, by hints, suggestions, illustrations, word-pictures, stories, and similar devices, carry the children with you, often with eyes closed, towards seeing their own exciting and unified pictures before ever they touch a brush?

This preliminary business is most important. You'd never dream of setting the child to do long multiplication sums without giving him some 'inspiration' (in this case the *method*). Similarly—though there's no other connection with Arithmetic!—a child needs stimulating before he's 'warmed up' enough to make a picture. A mere title on the board is mental cruelty.

I feel, therefore, that all those teachers who complain of their inability to teach Art would see immediate results if they concentrated on this introduction, rather than spending their 'teaching' time going round criticising individual technique. If the incentive is there, the pictures almost make themselves.

Organisation

There are a number of other points, however, which must be considered if the children are going to create pictures with real enjoyment.

1. *Materials*

Many schools still use sheets of paper which are too small, and young children strain their eyes painting minute details with fine brushes.

Both *paper* and *brushes* should be large. Sugar paper is cheaper than the small books of cartridge-paper often found.

Paints should be bright, especially for the younger Juniors. For this reason powder colours are best, so long as they don't become too watery. Some ten-year-olds may find pleasure in the steadier tones of water-colours.

Pastels are messy. *Wax crayons* or pencils are preferable, and *every child should have a set under his desk* for use on many occasions.

Charcoal sticks are much more suitable than pencils for outlining pictures. They make the bold free strokes which are far better than niggly pencil drawings.

2. *Organisation of Materials*

Powder-colours are more trouble than boxes of water-colours, but an hour or so spent in working out a system will pay dividends for years.

Small trays could be made, each holding six round china pots, one inch high (or those short fish-paste jars will do). The trays are easily made from scrap wood. One tray to four or six children will be ample.

Each tray might contain a pot of green and a pot of blue, with four other colours. A quarter-inch of colour in each pot is sufficient. The four other colours will vary in different trays, so that borrowing can occur. Or you can make larger trays.

The little pots can be filled from permanent jam-jars of colours. Both the mixing in the jam-jars and the 'topping-up' of the little pots can be done by children very quickly. The trays may be stored on top of one another in a small space, and if one of the pots in each is used simply as a water-pot, the giving-out process is reduced to a minimum.

3. *Class Organisation*

There must be freedom of movement and freedom of position during Art lessons. Teachers of large classes look cynically at photographs showing one or two children lying full-length on the floor painting a picture, but a more informal arrangement *is* possible, even with large classes.

Desks can face each other, to enable children to share colours and discuss work. Many children prefer to work with their paper pinned on cupboards, blackboards, walls, or doors, and if they are really interested in picture creation, as they should be, there is not the slightest chaos. There is movement to colour-trays, quiet discussion, and an atmosphere of concentration.

Outside work, too, is excellent in summer, though here you need drawing-boards, which call for money or ingenuity. If you can acquire such boards, they may be used in halls or corridors in the winter, and thus leave more space in the classroom.

USING THE CHILD'S ABILITY

So far I've discussed Art from the straightforward angle of making pictures, but you can't go on making pictures in a vacuum—at least, not with Primary children, and not all the time.

Picture-making is part of your children's lives—not something on its own in an Art lesson. It's something they can do from the very beginning, without going through any painful learning process. They live their pictures mentally just as they live their physical activities.

How, then, can we let them use this pleasurable achievement, in addition to letting them make pictures for their own sakes?

I strongly believe that children should be continually making pictures; that Art should be an ever-present part of their activities; that brushes and paints and coloured pencils should be freely available, and not simply given out in a miserly fashion at fixed times.

How does the picture-making of *your* class fit in with these remarks?

Let me give a number of detailed examples of the type of picture-making I mean, and thus perhaps dispel any ideas that I'm suggesting a continual glorified Art lesson, five days a week.

1. Illustrating Compositions

Although sensible teachers these days don't confine written expression to the composition book, there is the occasional need for such formal work.

Backward children—and how often we forget them in a book like this!—gain tremendous encouragement if they are allowed to illustrate their written work. Here is something they *can* do, and the accompanying written expression is easier and smoother as a result. But more important, it is also more accurate, since the mental strain usually present is eased by the picture-making.

All this sounds very theoretical, but try it! If you've ever seen the sweat and toil of a dull child trying to do Composition, you'll agree that *any* method of making the work happier is worth while. And the opportunity to make pictures at the same time is such a method. But be prepared for the children who do *only* picture-making!

In addition, of course, the bright children also gain. There's a freshness and delight about illustrated composition which you will never find in the usual dull collection of words. And all good Primary text-books are illustrated, aren't they?

2. Making Picture-books

One of the most attractive activities to children is the making of their own picture-books about any topic under the sun. These can arise from Projects, Centres of Interest, Local Studies, or—if you don't believe in such natural subjects—from History, Geography, Nature Study, Scripture, and many an English story.

Some of the most interesting booklets I've ever seen were made by children about their holidays, but they'll embark just as enthusiastically on booklets about Christmas, rabbits, trains, gardening, pink elephants, sausages, and what-have-you.

They should often be allowed to choose their own subjects. Children are usually dying to tell somebody about something. Let them make a book about it instead. Two or three folded half-sheets of cartridge-paper can be sewn in a moment into a single-section book. A different colour for the cover is an advantage.

Children will design the outside title (don't forget 'by Johnny Jones'!), and take immense pains over the contents, making fancy borders to each page and careful illustrations scattered among the written story.

These books can form an interesting little 'library', and of course the older children can become more technical in their bookbinding efforts. Incidentally, all books you make in bookbinding lessons should surely be *used* in some way after they are made.

3. Making Group-folios

Some of the proudest products of many a Primary class are folios illustrating some study undertaken by the class or preferably by groups within the class. In the latter case each group does a separate folio.

The appearance of these folios varies with the age and ability of the class. Younger children will produce a set of drawings between a folded sheet of paper. Older ones will write and illustrate their discoveries at great length, making borders round both pictures and written work. They will design all-over patterns and titles on the covers, and even bind the books quite carefully and skilfully.

You may notice Art, Composition, Arithmetic, and Handwork hiding among the above activities; and of course the 'subject' of the folio. This may be almost any of the normal subjects, or simply 'Our Village', 'Things on Wheels', 'Our Shop', etc.

The work may follow up ordinary syllabus lessons in particular subjects, or you may give initiative to the children by suggesting folio-subjects to them. *Your* part is to supply the reference books (or some of them), the time, and advice.

This may seem to be more Composition than anything, but in fact there's quite a lot of Art about it, and the results reflect children's artistic creations admirably. (You're not going to sneeze at better written work, either!)

4. Wall-charts

I've mentioned elsewhere the pleasure obtained by groups of children in making wall-charts about topics being studied as Centres of Interest, or under subject-labels. Obviously, as with books and folios, a great deal of drawing, colouring, and design will go on to these charts and thus form another outlet for Art. But let the charts be *children's* charts.

5. Art in the Classroom

All the above suggestions are in the classroom, of course (except when you go out), but by this heading I mean the wide use of design, sketches, and lettering on the walls, doors, cupboards, etc., and at the children's desks. Here are a few examples:

(*a*) *Book Covers*

Pleasing patterns, or appropriate pictures, may be used to decorate dust-covers of exercise books, text-books, and library books. Exercise books can have all-over patterns of any type, or patterns with the initial letter of their subject as the motif. Text- and library books may have on their covers pictures derived from the subject-matter of the books.

(*b*) *Team and Attainment Charts*

Children can make their own designs for team charts, arithmetic 'ladders', etc. There's as much measurement-practice as Art in this, but border-designs, little figures to move along the charts, and lettering are all within the children's capabilities.

(*c*) *Labels*

All wall-collections, nature-table items, goods in the class shop, text-book piles, and so on, should be clearly and pleasantly labelled. The label should not merely include the heading, name, or price, but should be set in a simple border-design. Don't expect sign-writer's perfection, but the room looks far more natural scattered with child-made labels than stiffly adorned with adult ones.

With younger children most of the items in the room should have names on them, and sentences about them, as aids to spelling and reading.

(*d*) *Reading books*

All children who are having difficulty with reading should be making their own reading books. These consist of little folded or zigzag booklets in which they write short sentences about pictures they draw, in comic-strip fashion. This activity is of tremendous value to poor readers, as it almost invariably leads them to that most necessary—but often missing—*desire* to read. And the desire to read is more important than all the aids in the world.

(*e*) '*Doodling*'

As I have suggested before, all children should have a set of wax pencils or crayons under their desks, and they should be encouraged to make constant use of them. Besides illustrating compositions and all kinds of written work, they should have odd pieces of paper or rough books available, and be allowed to 'doodle' pictures whenever they want. These pictures will often arise from work being done, and can then be used in the folios or picture-books, or on the wall-charts.

. . . . .

Well, that's all about Art. I haven't said anything about various techniques, such as paste-combing, stick-printing, edge-stencilling, cut-paper work, potato-printing, marbling, etc., because you can get those from pamphlets and courses. Nor have I gone deeply into the psychology of Art, but rather confined myself to a few practical suggestions on what to do and how to do it.

There's much more in Art than these mundane things, however, and I'd strongly recommend you to read *Art and the Child*, by Marion Richardson. It will remind you that Art is bound up with the child's existence.

CHAPTER XVI

THE WIDE SCOPE OF HANDWORK

I'M only using the word 'Handwork' under strong protest. If I had my way the term would disappear from time-tables in favour of two other words—'Reproduction' and 'Creation'.

THE TWO TYPES OF HANDWORK

By 'Reproduction', as I explained as far back as Chapter V, I mean the type of Handwork which practises certain necessary skills—the lessons in which children learn to paste, measure, cut, draw straight lines, and so on. Under 'Reproduction' must come almost all the occupations so often found under the 'Handwork' or 'Craft' label in Primary Schools. *Paper and card work*, *bookbinding*, *basketry*, *weaving*, *rug-making*, *raffia-work*, even *needlework* and some *clay-work*—all these tend to be mere reproduction and nothing more.

I would earnestly ask you to stop reading for a moment and think about *your* Handwork. How much of it is mere working to your instructions, or to instructions from a book? Oh, I know what beautiful display models you can produce in this way for your open days and your H.M.I.'s, but if you're that sort of teacher—well—no, I'd better not say it!

The point is that the whole business is supposed to be directed towards *educating* the child. And turning him into a robot reproducing-machine is only part of the job; without the *other* form of Handwork—Creation—it's almost a waste of time. Yet many thousands of classes do absolutely no form of Handwork beyond making things to order. I've even seen children putting together models which were practically completed beforehand by some well-meaning firm. All the children had to do was to carry out one or two infantile instructions and they'd 'made' whatever the gadget was, to the delight of admiring parents and the envy of most other teachers.

Education? My foot!

Creation, as distinct from Reproduction, involves thought, initiative, and ingenuity on the part of the child. He has to plan jobs, decide on the material he needs, work out patterns and designs. Much creative work *should*, of course, arise from the reproductive work done in the common crafts. In needlework, for example, girls who have learnt techniques should pass on to designing something they need; in basketry children should begin to work out their own basket-patterns, once they have got the hang of setting-up and a few weaving-strokes; in bookbinding, books should eventually be made *and used* for various purposes.

But in addition there are many other types of creative work at which I've already hinted previously, and I'm wondering how much of *that* sort of Handwork you do. I'll say more about this later, as well as discussing the creative aspect of formal Crafts.

First, though, I would like to say something about Reproduction, or 'Technique Handwork'.

'REPRODUCTIVE' HANDWORK

Basically, we are trying to develop the child's use of his hands. In the lower Primary School his muscles are clumsy and not under detailed control, and the initial purpose of Handwork is to bring these muscles to do increasingly accurate work.

There is, however, a second and parallel aim; and it is to develop the beginnings of taste and craftsmanship in the child. That is why many thinking teachers prefer to call the subject Crafts.

This second purpose, though, has to take a back seat during much of the time in the Primary School, but there is the danger that it may take no seat at all. Just as the solving of real-life problems has been ousted by 'sums' in Arithmetic, and the putting of thoughts on paper has been replaced by artificial Composition, so in Handwork the development of taste and craftsmanship may be forgotten in the concentration on 'showing them how'.

With this at the back of your mind, then, let's take a quick look at some of the more common 'Technique Crafts'.

1. *Bookbinding*

This is perhaps the most common craft, if you include the introductory paper and card work leading up to simple book-making proper. It is certainly valuable in accuracy-training, since it involves ruler-work, line-drawing, cutting, folding, and pasting, as well as practice in clean working. And if you are lively, it involves also design and art-work when the models are decorated.

All the same, I think perhaps it is a mistake to do too much of this type of work in the Primary School, since there is little taste-training or creative work which can arise from it, and its value is thus limited to the accuracy-practice which I have mentioned. I suspect, too, that its popularity is mainly due to the ease with which mass-instruction can be imparted, with everybody doing the same thing at the same time!

2. *Weaving*

There are various forms of weaving, involving wool, raffia, sea-grass, etc., and including the use of looms of various kinds.

In these crafts there is not only finger-training, but also the later possibility of originality in design and purpose. In addition, the active rural school can develop a fascinating centre of interest in the gathering of wool, the discovery and practice of the various processes through which it goes, the making and using of vegetable dyes, and the eventual weaving of articles from this home-produced, home-dyed wool, on home-made looms,

Thus there can be more of the Craft and less of the Handwork in this occupation. An interesting but not too educational departure is the seating of ready-made stool-frames, with sea-grass.

3. *Basketry*

I'm rather fond of this craft, for I've found older Primary children also fond of it. It's essentially for stronger fingers than the seven- and eight-year-olds have, and the teacher has to finish off some of the top borders. But after the initial techniques are learnt it can become a real individual craft activity, with endless variety in shape, weave, colour, and decoration.

It is more expensive these days than most crafts, but easily pays for itself by the sale of finished products. Moreover, it is a technique easily learnt by the teacher, a step ahead of the class!

4. *Plasticine and Clay*

This craft is in a rather different category from the others, except where older children attempt real pottery work with clay.

Normally in the Primary School, however, these two media are used in a rather purposeless manner. As often as not they are given out as time-fillers. The children are told to make the first thing that comes into the teacher's head, they work carefully on it for an hour, and then roll it up as if it never existed.

I think it's essential that clay and Plasticine models should be preserved for a short time at least, and also that the class should make something towards an integrated model, rather than all doing the same thing.

But apart from that, these two media are often overdone in the Primary School. They have a certain manipulative value, but can hardly be called a craft until serious pottery work is attempted, and this is normally beyond the Junior stage.

5. *Other 'Technique Crafts'*

There are a number of other possible activities, some of a low educational value, and, of course, some which might just as easily be labelled Art. (In fact, I *ought* to have bracketed Art and Craft together in this book. Blame your time-tables!)

Details of materials and instructional booklets can be obtained from the well-known supply firms, especially Dryad's of Leicester and Atlas Handicrafts of Manchester.

Here is a selection of other crafts, in case you're fed up with your present work:

- Gummed-paper work
- Plastics
- Leather-work
- Rug-making
- Lino-cutting
- Stencilling
- Stick-printing
- Felt-work
- Soft toy making
- Puppetry. (See later.)

Have a go at some of these, when you've measured their value. But don't forget what I said in the first place: they should all go further than the mere *techniques*, and Handwork itself should go even further.

'CREATIVE' HANDWORK

Now we come to the real value of Handwork—the educational possibilities for children when they have once begun to master techniques. Let's look first at the development of the ordinary crafts, and then at the wider creative work.

'Creation' in the Normal Crafts

As I've already said, I feel that more thought should be given by teachers to the progress made by the children in the crafts already 'done' in the school. From very early days you should be thinking: "They've got hold of a little technique now, what creative use can they make of it?"

The point is that children should very rapidly move away from these dull practice and exhibition models. Some of the models, such as book-marks, single-section books, leather purses, etc., have an ostensible purpose, but their making is decided upon by the teacher, and the making process is laid down in detail by the teacher.

You should, instead, be able to turn to your children and say, for example: "Now that you know how to make a little book, think of something you want a book for. What shape will be best? What size could it be? How thick and what colour will the pages be? What about the cover? What decoration can be put on it?"

And thus every child can still be making a book, but each book will have a purpose, and all books, like all children, will be different. This is perfectly possible after the earlier practice lessons.

Now you'll probably be saying: "Well, what's the difference? They're still making books, aren't they? The only thing seems to be that it's harder for the teacher keeping track of all the different shapes and sizes!"

Well, you know, there's really all the difference in the world. Outwardly, the type of book-making I've just suggested is so similar to the familiar bookbinding lesson that I don't blame you for wondering what I'm making a fuss about.

But think. Look back. In the 'technique' lessons the children are doing as they're told and producing a lot of books. In the 'creation' lessons implied above they're *using* the technique for a purpose. And I maintain that the *purpose* is the vital spark which makes the latter occupation a valuable one, while the former remains a routine but necessary chore.

I could elaborate this for hours, but I won't. Think, though, of tables, of spelling, of grammar, of handwriting practice, of modulator work. All these are 'chores' in their particular subject, but nobody would dream of doing nothing beyond them. Tables are learnt as an aid to Arithmetic; spelling, grammar, and handwriting as an aid to written expression; modulator work as an aid to Music. And all 'technique' Handwork should lead to 'creative' Handwork, in which the child uses his knowledge to make something for some special purpose of his own.

Books, then, should be made for many purposes: picture-collections, notes on other subjects, personal topics, stamp-collecting, 'My Village', 'My Dog', 'The Eskimos', and much individual finding-out by older Juniors.

The same argument applies to all the other well-known crafts, and I don't propose to repeat it with each one. But think out for yourself its application in *basketry*, when the children start thinking out their own patterns and purposes for baskets; in *weaving*, *rug-making*, *clay-modelling*, and the rest.

But I *do* beg you to think honestly, and not to suggest that I'm splitting hairs. And your best way, of course, is to consider the Handwork you're doing *now*—your next lesson, in fact. Ask yourself, for example:

1. What are the children going to make?
2. What choice did they have in the subject?
3. Are they all going to make the same thing?
4. If so, why?
5. How are they going to know how to make it?
6. Are they merely going to do as I say?
7. What will the resulting models be used for?
8. Having answered all the above questions, and thought about the answers, is it worth while going on with this particular work after all, or is there something more educational and purposeful which we can do?

'Creation' in a wider sense

Well, so much for the normal Handwork and what it *might* be. Now for the wider forms of creation, which may not have any particular name, which are often as a result not found in schools, but which are quite definitely Craft and quite definitely valuable.

I refer to models such as Roman villas, Zulu villages, churches, school localities, and so on. Let's have a look at them and their making (though we've had several preliminary looks in earlier chapters).

Often, as I said then, they suffer from the same complaint as the 'Technique Crafts': the *teacher* gives all the instructions. Maybe they come from a book or a magazine, complete with beautiful templates and detailed drawings. Everything is followed faithfully, and a lovely reproduction results. This is gazed at with pride by all, and the teacher gets a marvellous testimonial.

Give me, however, the queer conglomeration which can hardly be recognised, provided that the *children* thought it out. For I'll be certain that the *next* model will be an improvement, and I'll be certain that the children *learnt* something in the making.

An African Village

How do you set about this sort of thing? Well, I'll refer you back to earlier chapters, but I'll also tell you here the story of the African village mentioned in the Geography chapter.

The children had been reading in their books an exciting story of a little black boy, his life and adventures. Though the events were fictitious, the background was, of course, authentic, and well supported by photographs and drawings.

The class, being used to this sort of thing, at once wanted to make the village. Many teachers would have searched feverishly for templates, cut-outs, and instructions, but not this one.

"Right-ho!" she said. "Well, what do you need?"

The children rapidly compiled a list of the 'contents' of the village. There were huts, trees, a stream, crocodiles, canoes, fish in the stream, dogs, men and women, children, and so on. All this knowledge, of course, had been gained in the Geography lesson.

"Now," said the teacher, "let's share out the village. Who'll make the huts? Who'll make the trees . . . ?"

In this way groups and individuals contracted to make various items, with the aid of a little juggling by the teacher.

"We'll make it this afternoon," the teacher went on, "so think out what you'll need."

By the afternoon the children knew what they were going to do, and what they were going to *use*. Some had of course decided on Plasticine, while others combined Plasticine and paper. One or two were using matchboxes for huts, twigs and painted cotton-wool for trees, black Plasticine and paper clothes for people. Two children painted the stream and grass on a large sheet of paper.

The huts in particular were interesting, for though it was obvious what they were intended to be, no two were made in the same way. Some were made entirely of Plasticine; others had Plasticine walls and a paper roof; others were made of paper; some were thatched with straw, others with raffia, and so on.

The whole product was an admirable example of interested children thinking for themselves; children working quietly and engrossed on a communal effort; yet children *learning* both Handwork and Geography, not to mention co-operation and initiative.

You may quibble about the organisation. But in a class used to this sort of work you will have materials reasonably freely available—and your children will be used to getting them without fuss. Maybe you don't believe this, but it's like a lot of other things—you have to try it out first.

Well, think about this, as well as about your other Handwork. For this too is Handwork, and Handwork of real educational value.

HANDWORK AS A CENTRE OF INTEREST—PUPPETRY

Throughout this book I've stressed the impossibility of sticking to subjects if your children are learning in a lively way. And of all subjects, Creative Handwork probably lends itself more than any to wider work of the Centre of Interest variety.

I'd like to describe one such form of Handwork in detail, with the hope that you'll work out for yourselves other forms of creative work which can spread about the curriculum. The particular occupation I'll describe is the making and use of hand-puppets.

This activity has so many different aspects to it that I strongly recommend it to anyone seeking a quick method of getting away from the deadly restriction of 'lesson-compartments'. Besides Handwork (including a little Woodwork) the children do Needlework, Art, Speech Training, Reading, and Written Expression. And the puppet-plays which they act may arise from History, Scripture, and Geography, as well as from English. Thus puppetry can be a Centre of Interest with a vengeance, without stretching the imagination as some so-called Projects do. It's exciting and easy, requiring almost no special knowledge or technical skill. So if you've so far been scared of the thing merely because it *looks* difficult, let me see if I can persuade you otherwise.

Making the Puppets

You first require puppet-heads of some kind. There are many ways of making these, ranging from gooey handfuls of sticky pulp to flat heads cut from a piece of cardboard; from carved lumps of wood to faces painted on match-boxes.

You might like to try all of these (especially the match-boxes as an introduction) but the method I prefer with Primary children is to make a mask of Plasticine, pack it with crumpled newspaper, and build up the rest of the head from there. Quite young Juniors can complete a smooth, strong, and very realistic puppet-head by this method in six half-hour lessons. Here are the details (and I hope you notice the simplicity of the materials):

Materials

(First lesson) Plasticine, modelling-boards. (Remaining lessons) Newspaper, paste, brushes, finger-tube. (For dressing) Needles and cotton, cloth from rag-bag.

First lesson—The 'face-shape'

Each child has a piece of Plasticine and a modelling-board. The Plasticine is shaped like half an egg (cut lengthways), and placed flat side down on the board. Make sure that the flat side is kept flat on the board throughout. A bit of initial thumping will help.

The Plasticine is next shaped into a face (no ears), taking care not to disturb the sharp corner between the flat bottom and the sides. There should be no eyes—merely deep sockets—and pronounced eyebrows, nose, and lips will be necessary. Children often make eye-sockets too near to the top of the head, and they completely forget the chin, as well as preferring little pimply noses. Don't however, impose so many restrictions that all faces are alike. Encourage variety.

Second and third lessons—Making the mask

Each child now requires a sheet or two of newspaper, paste, and a brush. The Plasticine face is covered with tiny bits of newspaper, as big as the little finger-nail, each slightly overlapping another. Particular care should be taken to stick well down to the Plasticine in the eye-sockets, round the lips, etc., so that the face-shape is retained.

Children tend to use bits of paper which are too big, and thus the shape is hidden, or flaps stick out here and there. The whole upper part should be covered, down to the modelling-board, but *not* the flat underneath. The paper should be well soaked with paste for easy shaping.

This process should be completed *five or six times*. In order to be certain that the whole face is in fact covered each time it is best to cover alternately, first with white margin-paper, then with printed paper, and so on. Some makers prefer to use two different colours of tissue-paper, and this certainly moulds more easily. The number of layers can be reduced if muslin is used for one layer. Or use bandages.

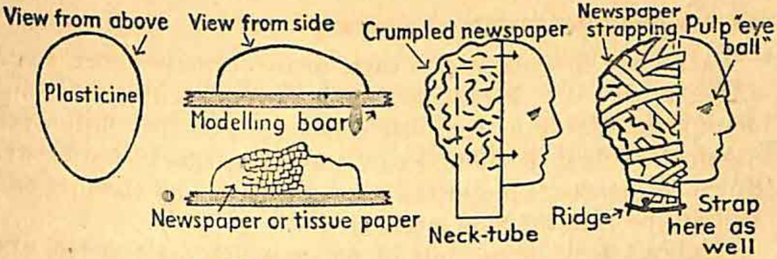
After the last coat is pasted on, two little balls of paste-soaked newspaper can be stuck into the eye-sockets. Models should then be left to dry.

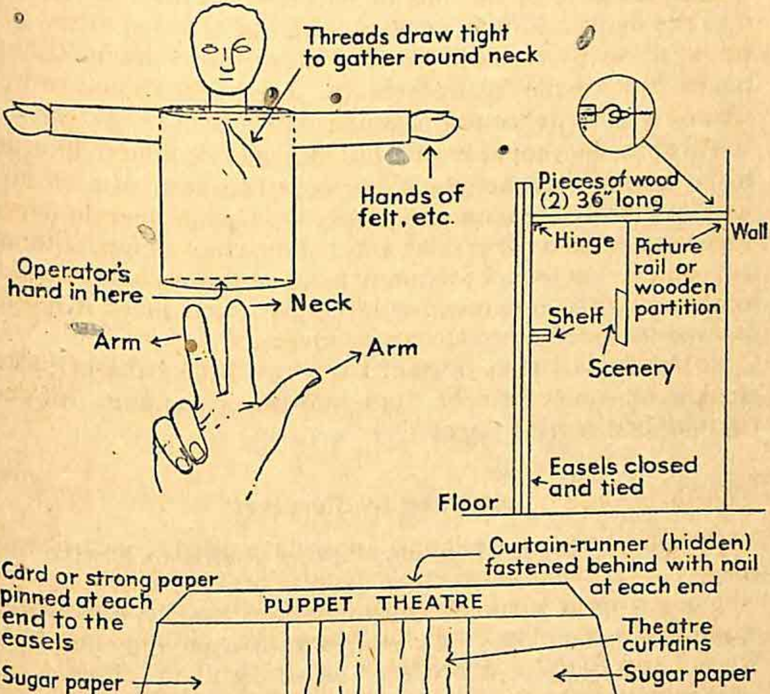
Fourth and fifth lessons—Full head and neck

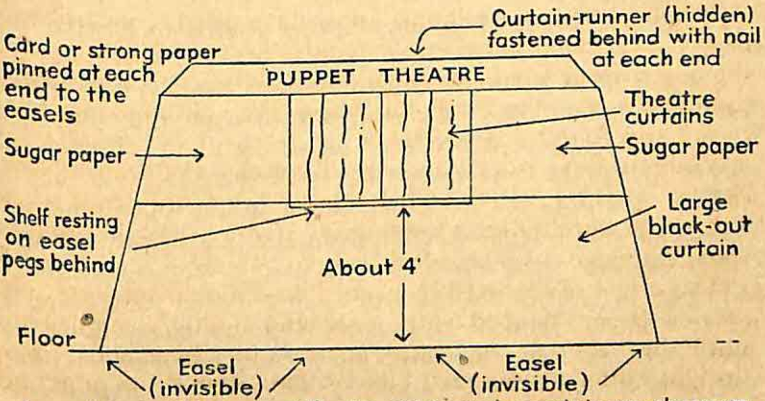
The newspaper covering will now have dried to a cardboard mask. The Plasticine is easily removed, often in one piece, if the edges are levered away from the mask first. Some people prefer to grease the Plasticine before the first covering, but I have never found this necessary.

You now have faces without necks or backs of heads. Necks can be made by rolling and sticking tubes of thin card which will just fit the children's forefingers. If you live in the country, spent cartridge-cases are ideal.

The inside of the mask is packed with a quarter-sheet or so of newspaper, daubed with paste and lightly crumpled up, until the neck can be rested against the filling and remain upright. Similar crumpled bits are built round the tube until






Curtain-runner (hidden) fastened behind with nail at each end
Card or strong paper pinned at each end to the easels
PUPPET THEATRE
Theatre curtains
Sugar paper
Sugar paper
Large black-out curtain
Shelf resting on easel pegs behind
About 4'
Floor
Easel (invisible)
Easel (invisible)

A simple but striking puppet theatre which can be made in any classroom the approximate head-shape is obtained. Children almost always forget to fill up *at the top of* and *behind* the tube.

When the shape is satisfactory, it should be strapped into place with narrow strips of newspaper which will be pasted on to the mask at their ends. Care must be taken to paste well down the neck also, and especially under the chin, where smaller bits of paper will be necessary.

The back of the head must be covered, as was the mask, five or six times, and then allowed to dry.

Sixth lesson—Finishing the head

You now have a complete head and neck. The next step is painting, and eyebrows and lips should stand out clearly. Bright colours are preferable to sickly natural ones. Cardboard ears may be stuck on if desired.

The question of *hair* is an interesting one. Some children will paint it, but others will show much imagination with rope, wool, cotton wool, kapok, horse-hair, etc., and lively ones will experiment with moustaches and beards.

At this stage, too, a ridge of string or thick card should be stuck around the neck, half an inch below the chin, for the purpose of retaining the clothes later.

Dressing the Puppets

The puppet-head, when dry, requires clothes to be attached to it.

There is great scope for ingenuity here, but the basic dress is simple. It consists of a cloth glove to cover the operator's hand. It should have two arms in which fit the thumb and second finger, the forefinger fitting in the neck.

When the puppet's neck is inserted in the open top, and the two threads pulled and tied, the glove should hold firmly to the neck, since the neck-ridge prevents it from slipping off.

More clothes can of course be made to cover the basic glove, and children love designing these. Hats, bonnets, etc., are also often made. A piece of soft plastic-covered wire, incorporated in each of the hands, can be bent if necessary to hold sticks, baskets, etc.

It is a good idea to let children take puppet-heads home to dress them. This gets parents interested, and results in a valuable variety of dresses and decorations.

Making the Theatre

Many teachers have realised how easy and profitable it is to make and dress puppets, but they still shy away from making a decent theatre. Thus excellent puppets waste their talents in an orange-box, or peeping apologetically over a blackboard or table-top.

Yet a most impressive theatre can be made with the following ingredients:

Two easels;
Large curtain (black-out?);
Two large sheets sugar-paper;
Drawing-pins.

Those are the minimum requirements, but a better job can be made with these additional odds-and-ends:

A very large cardboard carton;
Four-foot curtain runner with rollers;
Two small curtains for the above;
Three pieces of wood 3 feet by 3 inches;
Two small hinges with screws;
Two small hooks, with matching rings, all made to screw into wood;
Hammer, screwdriver, and a few three-inch nails.

Don't let that last list put you off, for it's nothing like as complicated as it looks. It's almost certain that children will be able to supply everything from lumber-rooms. And in any case, you will have the basic needs of the first list.

The drawings should explain most things to you, and you will see that the initial requirement is for the large curtain to be stretched and pinned across both easels to about four feet from the ground. At the top of the curtain the easels could be about a yard apart. Then the bits of easel still showing are covered with the sugar-paper, and it looks better if the insides (i.e. stage) edges of this paper are vertical (and not sloping with the easels). The outside edges of both the paper and the curtain should be cleanly turned round the easel sides.

The refinements which are shown in the drawings are well worth while, especially the stage-shelf which the puppets can use. As you see, it rests on easel-pegs, but nails or brackets would make a firmer job. For preference it should be cut to fit *partly between* the two easels, and thus act as a stretcher for the big curtain.

The top board, with name on, can be made from pieces of card from the grocer's, or from lengths of strawboard joined end to end. The theatre looks incomplete without it, and it serves to hide the curtain-runner if you have one. This runner can be screwed or nailed to the easel at either end, or it can merely drop on to a couple of hooks screwed there.

The supports to the wall are not essential, since the easels would stand on their own. The resultant slope, however, looks wrong, and is an inconvenience with shelf and curtains. Moreover, two supports such as those shown can be put to use in hanging scenery in the form of houses, doors, woods, etc., painted by the children for the puppets to use.

The supports are hinged to the top of each easel by means of small hinges. The hook-and-eye arrangement at the wall-end makes it possible to unhook, drop the supports, and have the whole thing propped up against the wall in a few seconds, and thus out of the way.

If you examine this idea carefully, in fact, you will see that the complete theatre can be put together or taken apart very quickly. I've timed myself over this, and I've had one back in its constituent parts in five minutes. The only signs of it were two rings in the picture-rail, four nails sticking from the back of two innocent-looking easels, and two strange-looking lengths of wood hanging quietly from the backs of the easels, in nobody's way. The stage curtains and runner lifted straight out;

so did the stage-shelf; and the rest had been fastened with drawing-pins.

. . . . .

Well, I'd better leave you to think this out, but honestly, it could be put up by a blind man with his hands tied behind his back.

Using the Puppets

The tremendous value of puppet-making lies in the wide net it casts over the time-table and syllabus. Yet puppets are not so all-embracing as to strain the imagination, and most certainly the various activities never bore the children.

At its height, puppetry may occupy four or five hours in a week, taking in some of the Handwork, Needlework, Art, English, History, Scripture, and Geography periods. So far I've discussed puppet and theatre-making, involving Handwork, Needlework, and Art. Now we come to the actual using of the puppets, which is of course the climax as far as the child is concerned.

Let me say at once that acting with puppets isn't easy. This would appear to be for two reasons:

1. The children can't get Punch-and-Judy out of their minds, and tend to do a lot of head-banging and funny-voice-making. It's hardly fair to ban this, but it should be slowly weeded out.
2. The children are unable to see the puppets as others see them. Much practice in front of a mirror will help to overcome this handicap.

Action-practice

Although the children will naturally be allowed in the theatre as soon as it is made, the early planned stages of acting should be done mainly in desks. Children should practise wearing the puppets (i.e. thumb for left arm, forefinger for neck, and second finger for right arm—unless the child is left-handed). Let them play with the puppets for a while, then start practising the following actions. (You might practise them yourself, too!)

1. Walking. A slight bobbing action.
2. Running. A quicker action, leaning slightly forward.
3. Turning. The whole hand must turn, since the forefinger cannot turn on its own.
4. Looking in different directions, including up and down.
5. Nodding. This is easy.
6. Shaking the head. This is not easy, since again the whole hand must turn in order to turn the forefinger.
7. Clapping. Easy.
8. Waving one arm. Not so easy.
9. Knitting. Try it!
10. Rubbing the nose.
11. Eating a meal.
12. Shaking hands with another puppet.
13. Carrying something (small box, inkwell, etc.) with appropriate grunts.
14. Picking something up and putting it down.
15. Knocking on a door (children tapping wood with free hand or toe on floor).
16. Dancing with another puppet.
17. Scrubbing a floor or polishing a window.

Ask the children for other suggestions, and let them go into the theatre and get the puppets to act something, the others guessing what it is.

Speech-practice

Odd snatches of speech will have crept into the action-practice suggested above, and the next step is to pair off the children to practise their puppets in talking to each other. Let them discuss anything they wish, and encourage them to act as well, with little props. They can take it in turns to use the theatre while the other children are working on discussions at their desks. Let them use the theatre, too, at many odd moments, wet playtimes, 'Children's Time' periods, and so on.

Likely faults

You will notice several faults in these early 'appearances'. Here are some of them:

1. The puppets will do a lot of nodding, since the forefinger is so easily bent, and the children are not at first aware of the violent head-wagging it causes.

2. Puppets will often have a habit of walking sideways, the children forgetting to face them the way they're going.

3. Puppets will bob up and down, since children forget that the audience can only see the part showing above the shelf.

4. Puppets will often be placed too low, with only the head showing. Again the shelf is the important guide.

5. Voices may be disguised unnecessarily. It is much better to speak clearly and well.

6. Puppets will occasionally enter and leave upwards and downwards, instead of walking to and from the wings. This may be due to early practice behind a blackboard, but looks most ludicrous to the audience.

Most of these faults can be remedied by one simple rule: *Always watch your puppets*. And if the children try to visualise how the puppet looks from the front they will begin to improve.

A word about the position of the children. When you have no scenery it will be necessary for them to kneel or sit so that their heads are below stage-level, though two can stand behind the 'wings' formed by the covered easels. The standing ones naturally have their field of action limited.

Making a Play

You have now reached the stage where plays can begin rehearsal. Some of the later practice will have turned into plays in any case, and little groups will almost certainly have prepared plays of their own accord. This trend should be encouraged, until the whole class is occupied in self-chosen groups for the purpose of making self-chosen plays.

It's surprising how this does in fact work out. You'll even find it possible to say: "You, you, you, and you; make a play!" Children delight in this opportunity to use their initiative (and how rarely they get it!).

Many of these plays will be crude and 'slapstick'. They'll ramble on without plot or ending. But there will be speech and self-expression, and you'll notice both the shy and the backward ones beginning to blossom. Plays will be made from recently read stories, well-known fairy-stories and pantomimes, and radio serials, as well as from the children's own imaginations. *You* will be able to suggest subjects, too, and here come your current English, History, Geography, and Scripture stories, which are often most suitable for puppet-dramatisation.

Written expression follows, when children put the plays they have made into writing, and make little play-books. I would not normally recommend the *reading* of ready-made puppet-plays, but I have seen it work wonders with the reading-ability of *backward* children. The puppet-acting suffered, but the children began to read with pleasure.

Three requirements will soon make themselves known: the need for special puppets, the need for scenery, and the need for 'props'.

Special puppets, such as witches, animals, dwarfs, etc., can be added as needed, being made by the method already known to the children, or by other methods you may like to try.

Scenery and Props

Scenery-making is most interesting, and gives an ideal opportunity to the children of painting really big pictures. Backcloths can be painted on sheets of strong brown paper or strawboard, reinforced if required by laths.

First attempts will be simple backgrounds, but later the children will incorporate doors which open, windows through which puppets can peep, and tree-trunks from behind which they can appear.

These developments will allow more variety in the plays, since entrances need no longer be made only from the sides, and much more movement can be brought in.

A useful dodge is to incorporate muslin in parts of the scenery. This enables children to stand behind the backcloth and observe their puppets, though unseen themselves.

The scenery will hang from the theatre supports, and can be made easily reversible.

Children themselves will suggest 'props'—little chairs and tables, sticks, baskets, table-cloths, magic lamps, apples, cakes, balls, and so on. Much ingenuity (if allowed!) will be shown in the making of these, and still more variety will appear in the plays.

. . . . .

Well, I hope I've shown you that puppetry isn't merely a stunt, nor is it a complicated business. It's a valuable and fascinating activity, within the capacity of any class or school. I've given you only the beginnings here. You can go on to public performances (for school funds and a reference library!), and introduce much more ambitious puppets, props, and scenery.

But give the *children* a chance. Don't try to 'produce' them all the time, with 'do this', and 'don't do that'. This fussiness, aiming at adult standards, is the curse of all school dramatic work.

And could you also remember, please, that I've only described puppetry as *one* form of 'Centre of Interest' Handwork?

Look round for others.

CHAPTER XVII

WHAT OTHER SUBJECTS?

I'VE now covered almost all the subjects of the syllabus. In recent chapters, with reluctance, I've dealt with them under their familiar labels, but I've made no bones all along about stepping over boundaries.

I'm leaving Physical Training and Religious Knowledge to the local organisers and your personal feelings respectively, but I would like now to mention three subjects which ought to be on every time-table—though they often aren't. I mean Hygiene, Road Safety, and Citizenship.

HYGIENE

Occasionally Hygiene crops up apologetically among the Nature Study lessons, but more often than not it is conveniently forgotten, or else is used as a stop-gap for P.T. on wet days.

I'm not suggesting that Juniors should be taken through a complete anatomy course, but they should learn something about their own bodies and how to look after them. This learning should include the following:

1. Care of the teeth;
2. Care of the hair;
3. Cleanliness, including hands and nails;
4. Regular habits (use of lavatory, bedtime, etc.);
5. Food values, in a simple way;
6. Exercise;
7. Simple first-aid.

This may not appear to be a very long list, but the word 'tables' in your Arithmetic syllabus isn't a very long word, yet it takes a long time to put it behind you. It must be remembered that each of the above pieces of information will have to be repeated again and again in many ways. I wouldn't go so far as to examine finger-nails every morning, but regular inspection of hair, teeth, and nails will keep the need for care of them in front of the child's mind. There are many varied approaches to the different subjects, so that your lessons need never be dull. And there are now a few useful text-books on the market, especially those by Cyril Bibby.

There's no need to have Hygiene on the time-table, by the way. In fact, the word may well be forgotten, so long as the subject isn't. Your 'lessons' could best be fitted into the quarter-hour general period which I have suggested for 9.30 every morning.

ROAD SAFETY

For Hygiene all teachers should have the necessary knowledge. It's just tradition and inertia which keep it out of the schools. With Road Safety, however, there is an additional snag: it isn't even a subject. That is, there are no beautiful collections of facts to be learnt or sums to be done. There's nothing which can be marked or entered on a report. And I've even heard it said that it's nothing to do with teaching.

Well, I hope *you* don't feel that way. As far as the acquisition of factual knowledge is concerned, no doubt safety training *is* rather a waste of time—time, moreover, which could be used for vulgar fractions (sorry: not in *your* class, of course!). But of what use are vulgar fractions to a dead child? And it's no good saying that *parents* ought to train their children, for the fact is that they rarely do. Thus, as with many other things, the job falls to the teacher.

Here again, then, is something for your fifteen-minute general period, and it's a most difficult subject into the bargain. It is useless to trot out a list of 'don'ts' (you know what *your* reaction to this was, when *you* were young!). It's therefore necessary to apply real teaching skill to the lessons, in order to make your points in a valuable way.

Causes of accidents

But what points do you want to make? Clearly you must know yourself the types of carelessness which cause most accidents to children, and it may help if I list them here:

1. Dashing into the road without looking;
2. Coming out from behind stationary vehicles;
3. Playing with hoops, marbles, tops, and balls;
4. Playing near parked vehicles, which may move without warning;
5. Hanging on to the back of moving vehicles;
6. Jumping on and off moving buses;
7. 'Showing off' on cycles;
8. Riding defective cycles;
9. Carrying awkward articles or other children on cycles;
10. Turning suddenly on a cycle.

That's just a bare list, quickly read and as quickly forgotten. But read it again, and visualise all the activities of lively young children in connection with every point. Those ten points have been culled from death-lists. And those death-lists contained more children of Infant and Lower Junior age than of any other age—*your* children, if you don't do something.

As you might guess, by far the most common cause of accidents to young children is the sudden and unexpected move into traffic suggested in the first three points above. Any motorist knows that dogs and children at the side of the road are quite unpredictable. Your main form of attack, then, should be to make the kerb or road-side a danger-line in all the children's minds. The well-known 'Kerb Drill' is invaluable here. It shouldn't be merely pinned on the wall, but should be learnt and practised both in school and at the actual road-side. Week after week, year after year, children should be drilled continually to associate the kerb with danger, and—even more important—with the need to HALT.

KERB DRILL

AT THE KERB—*HALT*!
EYES RIGHT
EYES LEFT
EYES RIGHT AGAIN
THEN, IF THE ROAD IS CLEAR—
QUICK MARCH
DONT RUSH, CROSS CALMLY

I'm sorry that I'm apparently repeating the obvious. But I'm convinced that this training is one of those things so obvious that they're forgotten. When, for example, did *you* last mention road danger to your children?

I believe that in towns they should be mentioned *every day*. Nor should they be neglected in country schools. And most certainly an annual visit by a policeman and a few posters on the walls are quite inadequate.

Methods of approach

As with Hygiene, however, you may be stumped for different methods of approach to the comparatively few points you have to make. Here the various publications of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents should be of great help. The address of the Society is: 52 Grosvenor Gardens, London, S.W.1. There are many suggestions for activities, film-strips, written work, etc., in the various pamphlets and the periodical 'Safety Training'.

Here are a few ways of tackling the forms of carelessness mentioned above, and of instilling a more positive attitude to danger:

1. Encourage the children to watch for careless behaviour on the roads, and to discuss it with the class (but mind they don't catch *you*!).
2. Encourage them to help each other, and watch each other, at crossings.
3. Have the R.S.P.A. posters in the classroom, but *talk about them* and *change them* regularly.
4. Do practical work in hall or playground. Have 'kerbs', and 'roads' to be crossed. Let the children say and do their drill at each kerb. Inspect and discuss cycles, if any.
5. Try dramatisation—'acting' careless errors and their consequences.
6. Let the children write and talk about road safety, and senseless and sensible behaviour.
7. Let them illustrate incidents.
8. Read stories from the R.S.P.A. publications.
9. Have copies of the 'Children's Highway Code', and 'Teddy Tells You' in the classroom (both published by the R.S.P.A.).
10. Make free models of roads and traffic, with lights and crossings and traffic to use.
11. Let the children compile their own 'Highway Code'.

You'll notice that many of the above suggestions overflow from the 'casual remark' category into Art, Composition, Reading, etc. Road Safety, in fact, is an ideal subject for a

Centre of Interest, but that doesn't mean that it should never be mentioned at other times.

I repeat, it should be mentioned every day, if you prefer your children to live.

'CITIZENSHIP'

Your children come to school for a number of purposes, and one of the most important is to be trained as future members of a community. In a broad way, in fact, that may be said to be the *only* purpose. This sounds very solemn, and far removed from the daily grind, but all the same the tiniest child has to live among others, and as a grown-up he will have to live among other grown-ups, unless he dwells in a cave. So part of our job is to help him to fit in.

In the Primary School this job will be done indirectly for the most part. And again this often means that it isn't done at all. I'd like, then, to suggest some of the things that can happen in your class to help in this very difficult problem of human relationships, present and future.

Civics, Citizenship, Community-training, or whatever you like to call it, is a very complicated business, and it is necessary to remember that a community may be large or small. But whether it's a home or a town, a school or the world, the members of it should:

1. Understand what a 'community' *means*;
2. Appreciate their own duty to the community;
3. Know how to use their leisure profitably and sensibly;
4. Be able to put up with the failings of others;
5. Understand the rights of others;
6. Know something of the duties of others.

(You'll notice that the requirements fall into two main groups: those connected with one's self and those connected with others).

All this is very much above children, and looks more like a code for nations. Yet it can in fact be applied to children in a simple form. Here are four main ways in which you can help your children to begin this community-living business:

1. Make the School into a Community

Some schools are factories; some are chaotic; some are hateful to the children in them; some are pleasant and homely gatherings. The differences seem to bear no relation to the size of the school or to the locality. They *must* be due mainly to the Head and the staff. And when you see classrooms in the same school which themselves differ noticeably as communities, it becomes even more obvious that the teacher has a tremendous influence on the school relationships of the children.

If *your* school isn't a pleasant community I suppose the only real solution is to sack some of the teachers, and that would be rather difficult. But there are some things which *can* be done.

You can, and must, encourage the children to think of the school with pride. There can be friendly inter-class and inter-school competitions, and above all there can be a school badge and simple school uniform, for most parents willingly co-operate. There can be more 'mixing' activities, clubs and groups for art and gardening and dramatic work and hobbies and model-making (for it's amazing how some children in a school never get to know others!). There can be more friendly assemblies, more reference to 'our school' and 'our children'.

It's all very subtle, I know. But somehow, a child *must* be helped to feel a pride in his school, and in all the other children in it. For without that common feeling you will waste much of your time.

2. Make the Classroom into a Community

Re-read what I said about the school, for much of it applies also to a classroom. There are many other little things applicable to the classroom, though.

Doing jobs, for example. Most teachers train a couple of reliable monitors, and leave it at that. Yet the doing of a job for others is one of the finest gestures in any community, and in a classroom there are many little jobs. Giving out things for different types of lessons, looking after flowers, wall-displays, library, cupboards, milk—these and other tasks should be shared throughout the whole class, however badly they may be done by some children.

Social behaviour, too, is only too often lacking in classrooms, and thus among adults. Over-emphasised manners can be irritating, but lack of any decencies is far worse, and standards of behaviour are at a low level these days.

I feel that more door-opening, 'excuse me's', helping of weaker children, and general consideration for others could well be imported into many schools. It would, in fact, be a good thing if teachers from some schools could visit other schools, and see the astounding difference in the manners of the children there. But it might be difficult to find sufficient receiving schools nowadays!

3. Help Children by Means of Lessons

Although my two previous suggestions are the most important (and the most difficult to carry out) there are also many *lessons* in which you can help your children towards community-living.

All History and Geography work, for example, is basically concerned with the growth and present existences of people living together. I would go so far as to say that the greatest stress in these two subjects should be on this human relationship, 'working for each other' aspect.

Older children should have definite lessons in local government and the public services, with visits from public servants where possible. This should lead to the simple knowledge that *all* people really work for the community in some way. Children will rapidly provide lists of different occupations known to them, and discuss how they benefit others.

Nine- and ten-year-olds are capable of electing their own 'councils' and holding meetings. Some schools even abide by 'council' decisions on minor matters of organisation. Such activities can be carried out in connection with lessons on local and national elections, and the duties of the people elected.

Religious Knowledge lessons, too, should do far more than merely deal with Bible Stories. I'm almost sorry to see the disappearance of the 'moral lesson'; or at least I'd like to see it return under a new name—'Living Together', for example. For children nowadays are often hooligans out of school because nobody has suggested how they *might* behave. There has been no *positive* approach—merely a string of 'don'ts'.

It's difficult to avoid being smug, but schools ought to bring home to children the values of decent behaviour. The more we can do to encourage self-control and decency in the street, buses, cinemas, etc., the better teachers we will be.

4. Help Children to Use their Leisure

Perhaps the greatest adult evil today is the eternal search for ready-made entertainment. And those who aren't satisfied with what they find tend to get into trouble instead.

Wars and world worries are largely at the root of this aimlessness, but schools can do more than is usual to help children to live more positive lives.

I don't mean by giving them lessons on 'How to use your leisure hours'. I mean something more subtle than that. In fact, the only true way to achieve this aim is to *make learning interesting*. Which is rather amusing in a way, for that has really been the subject of this book.

But that's the crux of the problem, without a doubt. If you *can* turn out children who have enjoyed what they have been doing, and have been allowed to use their initiative often, surely they will be at an advantage in later life. *They* will be the ones who read and study and join clubs and make things and act and play games. And they will be the ones who keep out of trouble, because they're too busy to seek it.

You can have your little societies in school, but the root of your leisure-training is good teaching and enjoyable learning.

. . . . .

I suppose these two things might well sum up this topic for me. For good teaching and enjoyable learning are, of course, at the root of *all* aspects of Citizenship. And in a school where they exist, the children *are* members of a community—of the finest kind.

POSTSCRIPT

100 QUESTIONS FOR *YOU*

I'M coming to the end of my book, and I ought to call this last section 'So What?' For those two terse words seem to me to summarise very completely my parting shots. And those parting shots are coming at you in a machine-gun fire of one hundred questions.

They're not questions to be answered as a sort of test of whether you've read the book properly. In fact, you can answer them profitably without having read the thing at all. But I *do* ask you, most sincerely, to answer them honestly and privately to yourself. They're much too insignificant ever to figure in examinations, for examinations rarely deal with classrooms and the children in them. But answer them in writing if you like. And you'll see from the start what *I* expect the honest answers to be.

BASIC SUBJECTS

Speech

1. Do you have five minutes 'sound-accuracy' practice every day?

2. Do you practise also variety of 'tune', speed, volume, and stress?

3. Do your children have regular opportunities of talking *to* the class?

4. Are they allowed sometimes to talk *in* the class?

5. Do you have spontaneous dramatisation of stories and incidents?

6. Have you a 'dressing-up box' in the classroom?

7. Do you treat suitable poems chorally?

8. Are the children often permitted to tell you their little adventures?

9. Do you ever stop and analyse to yourself your children's speech, for clarity, variety, and confidence, remembering that

they will require this 'subject' as adults more often than all the others put together?

Reading

10. Do you yourself know the various methods of teaching the *beginnings* of reading?

11. Do you *use* these methods, rather than driving non-readers uselessly through books?

12. Do you realise how boring and meaningless the phonic method may become *on its own*?

13. Do you therefore deal mainly in sentences, phrases, and words with your backward readers?

14. Do you realise the value, to poor readers, of a change of *book* and a change of *method*?

15. Do you use simple standardised tests for discovering reading ages, rather than casual and inaccurate marking?

16. Do you group children for reading-practice according to reading ages, and not actual ages?

17. For this practice, do you have many small sets of books, *of varying difficulty*, rather than a few large sets?

18. Do you *talk* about what is being read, remembering that reading consists of both recognising words and *understanding them*?

19. Do you realise that, once a child can read, he must begin more and more to *read with a purpose*, rather than continuing to 'bark from a book'?

20. Do you therefore have much silent reading for the good readers, both of fiction and non-fiction?

21. Have you a class library, looked after, added to, and used freely by the children?

22. Have you, in this library, many copies of non-fiction books (History, Geography, etc.), and are the children allowed to work with them in individual studies?

Written Expression

23. Do you allow wide freedom in Composition subjects (or are you one of those teachers who set subjects arbitrarily)?

24. Do you realise that *all* original writing is Composition, whether it is written artificially in a special exercise book or passed surreptitiously to another child on a scrap of paper?

25. Do you therefore recognise the Composition Book for what it is—merely *one* place for written composition?

26. Do you thus allow your children to write elsewhere and often?

27. Do you, for example, let them write letters, make books and newspapers, keep diaries, and write *their own notes* in other subjects?

28. Do you allow the children to write poems when they feel like it?

29. Do you realise that almost all children do their best in written work (however poor the result may appear by adult standards)?

30. Do you therefore realise how demoralising it is to have *every* mistake crossed out?

31. Do you as a result concentrate on *one* aspect at a time when marking book-work, and even refrain from marking at all the freer forms of written expression?

32. Do you work with a basic spelling-list (such as Schonell's), giving a few words to be learnt each day?

33. Do your children have 'personal dictionaries', in which they write new words which come to their notice?

34. Do you use reasonable restraint in the number of English exercises you set (or are you a slave to a certain text-book)?

35. Do you keep handwriting mainly to its own practice-period, without nagging children continually about it at other times?

Arithmetic

36. Do your children *like* Arithmetic?

37. Have you ever asked yourself what Arithmetic is—and thus realised that it isn't merely sums?

38. Have you, as a result, ceased to set strings of sums every day?

39. Do you, whenever sums *are* being done, take care to set

a real-life problem requiring the same sum process for its solution?

40. Have you in this way uprooted the idea that 'problems' are a separate subject?

41. Do you realise that the *division* aspect of 'tables' should be learnt alongside the multiplication aspect?

42. Do you always refer to 'table facts' in a fourfold way (e.g. 3×6, 6×3, 18÷3, and 18÷6, *all at the same time*)?

43. Do you realise how very much simplified table-learning can be, if the answers to the previous two questions are "Yes"?

44. Do you agree that a lot of little sums are far more valuable than a few big ones?

45. Do you have a text-book which (*a*) teaches, and (*b*) moves very, very slowly over very small stages (or haven't you thought about these two necessities)?

46. Do you teach much Arithmetic by *practical* methods, realising that this is slower but surer?

47. Do you object to forcing *all* children to do the unreal Arithmetic which is only necessary for the Grammar School few?

48. Do you *use* Arithmetic as much as possible, realising that practical application will be the only future value of this subject to most children?

49. Have you ceased to do a solid hour of Arithmetic every morning?

50. If not, don't you think that an hour a day is out of all proportion to the true value of the subject?

THE REST OF THE SUBJECTS

Geography, History, and Nature Study

51. Do you continually, in these subjects, make comparisons with the children's own lives and surroundings?

52. Do you realise how small is the world known to the children?

53. Do you thus take care in your casual remarks about things and places which are *not* known?

54. Have you dealt with your own area thoroughly, realising

that Geography, History, and Nature Study can in this way become real, and lead more naturally to wider studies?

55. Do you give opportunities to the older children to find things out for themselves, and do you provide books from which they can do this?

56. Do you take every opportunity of making contact with real things from other countries and other days?

57. Have you, in Geography, got into touch with children in other countries and other towns?

58. Do you realise that *people* are far more important than *things* to children, in *all* subjects?

59. Do you realise how deadly it is to 'read the next chapter and copy these notes'?

60. Do your children therefore make things, go to places, arrange displays and collections, prepare folios, and carry out similar forms of real learning?

61. Do you make frequent use of topics and Centres of Interest, from which these three subjects, and others, often arise naturally?

62. Have you a Nature Corner continually in your classroom, labelled and looked after by the children, and *used* by you?

63. Is your Nature Study syllabus fluid, to allow for whatever the children may discover or bring?

Art

64. Do you often give freedom of subject in picture and pattern-making?

65. Do you realise the value of *big* pictures and designs, even if you have to paint on newspaper?

66. Do you realise that children don't always see things as *we* see them?

67. Do you therefore refrain from telling them *how* to paint pictures?

68. Do you vary your Art lessons, doing design of various kinds, and pictures in various media?

69. Do you link picture and design-making with other school work as much as possible?

70. Are your materials efficiently organised?

71. Have you managed to replace messy pastels with clean wax crayons?

72. Do you keep these crayons under desks, so that they can be used on many occasions, in many subjects?

73. Have you a 'Children's picture gallery'?

Handwork

74. Do you recognise the existence of two types of Handwork—the 'technique' and the 'creative'?

75. Do you therefore tell children *how* to do some things, but also allow them to 'have a go' with ideas of their own?

76. Do you make most things *to be used* (or only for exhibition!)?

77. Is there always a 'free model' in course of construction in your room?

78. Have you an odds-and-ends box, and a mixed collection of tools?

79. Do you link Handwork with other subjects as much as possible?

80. Do you vary your Handwork, giving experience in many media?

GENERAL

81. Do you really *know* your children, with all their little individual differences of intelligence, temperament, home background, health, and previous teaching?

82. In all your work, therefore, do you keep at the front of your mind the fact that *children are all different*, and that there's no such thing as a 'class'.

83. Do you honestly allow for the curiosity, tirelessness, group-spirit, collecting habits, creative desires, and lack of self-consciousness of Primary children?

84. Do you give many opportunities for the children to use their *initiative* in (to name a few) such types of work as the following:

(*a*) Written expression;
(*b*) Mime;
(*c*) Spontaneous dramatisation;

(*d*) Reading for information;
(*e*) Collecting things;
(*f*) Making things (books, charts, folios, as well as models)
—or do they only do things under your strict control?

85. Are your children always active, either mentally or physically?

86. Do the children often work in *groups*?

87. Are there 'spare-time activities' always going on in your classroom?

88. Do you share out the classroom jobs among *all* your children, however badly some of them may do them?

89. Do you remember the need for training in bodily care and cleanliness?

90. Do you mention *road dangers* every day, and keep them in the children's minds in many ways?

91. Is your classroom a community, and do you help the children, by various means, to become good citizens in the future?

92. Do you ever take the children out of school?

93. Are your classroom walls bright and interesting, full of children's work, and *always changing*?

94. Do the children move freely but quietly to get the things which they need (or do they eternally fuss round you)?

95. Are your desks moved round to suit the occasion (or are they permanently in rows)?

96. Do the children learn and do things at home (I *don't* mean homework!), and bring things to school?

97. Do you have periods set aside as 'Children's Time', in which they can use their initiative to follow up any work they wish?

98. Do your children often laugh *with* you (and sometimes *at* you!)?

99. Do they come to school early, and stay late, simply because there's something they *want* to do?

lastly . . .

100. Do you enjoy most of the things which happen in your classroom—*and do the children?*

Form No. 3.

PSY, RES.L-1

Bureau of Educational & Psychological Research Library.

The book is to be returned within the date stamped last.

....	....	....
....	....	....
....	....	....
....	....	....
....	....	....
....	....	....
....	....	....
....	....	....
....	....	....
....	....	....
....	....	....
....	....	....

WBGP-59/60-5119C-5M

372
GAG
No. 4
Coll. No 37
Author Ga
Title Com
Date.
372
GAG

The author—

J. C. GAGG is well known for his continued advocacy of a sensible middle course in teaching. His heavy post-bag from teachers at home and overseas shows the wide measure of agreement with his views, and how gladly his practical suggestions are welcomed.

He is in the unusual position of having been a teacher in city and country schools, training college lecturer, writer of School Broadcasts, Children's Hour speaker and contributor to British and New Zealand journals. This wide and varied experience, added to his present work as a County Advisory Teacher in Primary Schools has given him a unique opportunity of gaining first-hand knowledge of the problems and needs of the Primary School teacher.

A B C OF BOOKCRAFT

G. A. Catton

A practical course for Juniors, containing a series of lessons covering work up to the stage at which pupils are ready to undertake actual bookbinding.

7/6 net

AGILITY APPARATUS FOR THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mildred E. Head

Miss Head has provided a carefully-graded series of exercises designed to improve muscular development, promote initiative and a team spirit. Fully illustrated.

3/6 net

THE PERCUSSION BAND FROM A TO Z

Charles Bavin

A complete guide to Percussion Band work. The author explains how to start and run a band and the methods of grouping, and gives detailed instructions for the playing of each instrument. Illustrated.

5/- net

MUSIC: BACKGROUND NOTES

J. Raymond Tobin

Teaching notes on 75 topics range from seasonal topics to the initial stages of music-training, including rhythm, pitch, form, notation and aural work.

6/- net

EVANS BROTHERS LIMITED